

**A CRITIQUE OF
COLIN GRAY'S THEORY OF VICTORY
IN NUCLEAR WAR**

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of the requirements for the degree of
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This sub-thesis is my own work and all sources have been
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INTRODUCTION

One of the main sources of confusion in debates over American nuclear strategy is a failure by commentators to recognise the clear distinction between what is commonly known as 'declaratory' and 'operational' policy.¹ The former refers to statements by the U.S. Administration on the requirements of deterrence and America's national security objectives more generally; while the latter refers to the actual war-fighting strategy the U.S. would attempt to implement in the event of nuclear war. American strategic nuclear doctrine is contained in a Single Integrated Operational Plan, or SIOP.² A feature of American nuclear strategy over the past twenty years has been the incongruity between declaratory policy and actual war planning.

The tendency for successive U.S. Administrations to alter declaratory policy by attaching a new label to what remains essentially an unaltered targeting doctrine, led to erroneous claims in 1974 (the Schlessinger Doctrine) and 1980 (PD-59) that American nuclear strategy had fundamentally shifted from stable deterrence through 'Assured Destruction', to a nuclear war-fighting strategy with an emphasis on counterforce targeting. In fact, since 1962, the United States has adhered to a nuclear war-fighting strategy of which the principal objective has been damage limitation through the selective and controlled employment of nuclear weapons against military, political and industrial target sets in the Soviet Union. The exclusive targeting of Soviet cities has never been officially codified in American nuclear war plans. The dominant theme to emerge in the history of American nuclear strategy to 1989 is its

¹ The distinction was clearly made by Paul Nitze, 'Atoms, Strategy and Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, 34(2), January 1956, pp.187-198.

² For a history of the SIOP see Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', in Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (eds), *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1986, pp.57-83; Peter Pringle and William Arkin, *SIOP: Nuclear War from the Inside*, Sphere Books, London, 1983.

evolution towards a more refined and complex war-fighting strategy to strengthen the credibility of extended deterrent threats on behalf of distant allies.³

During the mid 1960s, however, Assured Destruction became declaratory policy for American strategic nuclear doctrine. While this policy did not resemble the targeting priorities contained in the SIOP, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued that an enduring capability to destroy the Soviet Union as a functioning twentieth century society in a retaliatory strike, was the basis for stable deterrence. Furthermore, as the Soviet Union gradually reduced America's overwhelming numerical superiority in long range nuclear weapons and acquired its own invulnerable force of retaliatory or second strike weapons, it was widely believed that a condition of Mutual Deterrence or Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) would become a permanent condition of the nuclear age.⁴ The sheer destructiveness of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery via intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), made it impossible to defend one's homeland from nuclear missile attack. MAD was raised to the status of orthodoxy in the United States arms control and strategic studies community during the 1960s. It was argued that the main criteria for strategic stability was the possession by both the Soviet Union and the United States, at all times, of an invulnerable retaliatory force of strategic nuclear weapons capable of inflicting unacceptable levels of damage upon each other's homeland.

For more than two decades MAD has been exposed to a variety of criticisms relating to its weakness as a theory of nuclear deterrence and its suicidal character as an operational strategy. By the mid-1970s the critique of MAD found its most

³ For the relationship between American nuclear strategy and extended deterrence see Earl C. Ravenal, 'Counterforce and Alliance: The Ultimate Connection', *International Security*, 6(4), Spring 1982, pp.20-43; Anthony Cordesman, *Deterrence in the 1980s: Part 1, American Strategic Forces and Extended Deterrence*, Adelphi Paper No.175, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Summer, 1982; Walter Slocombe, 'Extended Deterrence', *Washington Quarterly*, 7(4), Fall 1984, pp.93-103.

⁴ The most forthright statement of this view is Robert Jervis, 'MAD is the Best Possible Deterrent', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 41(3), March 1985, pp.43-45.

eloquent expression in the prolific writings of Colin Gray, a civilian strategic analyst at the forefront of 'New Wave' strategic theorists in the United States.⁵ According to Lawrence Freedman, Gray distinguished himself 'by his iconoclasm, refusal to bow to conventional wisdom, willingness to ask awkward questions and to offer uncompromising and sometimes outrageous answers'.⁶ Indeed, unlike many critics of MAD who only advocated greater flexibility and selectivity in targeting doctrine and the avoidance of city targeting for intra-war deterrence, Gray's critique was more profound and threatened to undermine the intellectual foundations of stable deterrence thinking. Gray's primary objective was to demonstrate why threats to destroy a fixed percentage of the Soviet population base - even as an ultimate dissuasive threat - when the American homeland is totally vulnerable to nuclear retaliation, could not form the basis of either a credible pre-war deterrent or a sound operational strategic nuclear doctrine. The culmination of Gray's strategic theoretical writings was the articulation of a theory of victory in nuclear war in 1979.

This thesis will assess the validity and relevance for the 1990s of Colin Gray's theory of victory. In the following chapter, the theory of victory will be described and explained. In particular the chapter will demonstrate how the theory of victory emerged from the strategic, political and technological environment of the 1970s and why Gray was compelled by strategic logic to go beyond the requirements of a war-fighting strategy, such as limited nuclear war, to advocate a war-winning or classical strategy. Chapter Two will provide an overview of the criticisms of Gray's theory of victory that have gradually emerged in strategic studies literature. The chapter will demonstrate that while such criticisms raise important questions pertaining to the

⁵ After a brief period as Assistant Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, Gray spent the second half of the 1970s as a professional staff member at the Hudson Institute. In 1981 he established and was founding President of the National Institute for Public Policy in Fairfax, Virginia, a position he held until 1990. He is currently Chairman and President of National Security Research, Inc.

⁶ Lawrence Freedman, 'The Strategists Vocation', *Survival*, xxv(4), July/August 1983, p.170. This view is shared by Ken Booth in his 'Book Review', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 7(1), March 1984, pp.97-103.

operational uncertainties of Gray's theory of victory, its political and technological feasibility and its alleged negative impact on strategic stability, they remain deficient for not examining the underlying assumptions of the theory of victory. The final chapter will, therefore, identify and critically analyse the assumptions underpinning Gray's strategic advocacy.

It has become fashionable for contemporary strategists to argue that the earliest period of 'Golden Age' of American strategic thinking is loosely bound by the publication of *Military Policy and National Security* (edited by W. W. Rostow) in 1954 and *On Escalation* (by H. Kahn) in 1960² and that all subsequent commentators add little to our understanding of strategic theory and mirror heavily from the intellectual output of their predecessors.³ In 1971 Colin Gray began to challenge the belief that an intellectual plateau had been reached concerning the impact of nuclear weapons on military strategy. While acknowledging that strategic studies had undoubtedly since 1945 been a high culture, Gray believed that strategic theory was in constant need of revision.⁴

The main impetus for Gray's critique of stable deterrence through MAD was the interaction of emerging strategic, political and technological developments which

² Colin S. Gray, *Strategy, Security and Public Policy: The American Experience* (The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1981), especially chapter 4 'The Golden Age', pp 4-18.

³ This theme is strongly conveyed in R. Jervis, 'Strategic Theory: What I Know and What's True', in Richard Kohn (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear War: After and Before*, 1987, pp 47-59; L. Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Macmillan, London, 1981; and R. Bryce, 'The Development of Nuclear Strategy', *International Security* 2(5), Spring 1978, pp 62-83.

⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'The Rise and Fall of Academic Strategy', *RUSI Journal* XVI, June 1971, pp 54-57.

⁵ As early as 1971 Gray claimed concerning strategic theory that one of the most dangerous beliefs is 'that a relatively number of writers has been situated', in 'Introduction: Some Views Critical of the Profession', *International Journal* XLV, 1970-71, p.199. This has scuttled a firm belief in all of Gray's writings on strategic studies. See in particular his *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment* (Adversity Press, London, 1982). A similar argument is advanced in H. Bull, 'The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1939' in R. Smith (ed.), *The Abernethy Papers: International Politics, 1919-1939*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972, pp.30-33.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLIN GRAY'S THEORY OF VICTORY IN NUCLEAR WAR

Colin Gray's Critique of Stable Deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)

It has become fashionable for contemporary strategists to argue that the creative period or 'Golden Age' of American strategic thinking is loosely bound by the publication of *Military Policy and National Security* (edited by W.W. Kaufman) in 1956 and *On Escalation* (by H. Kahn) in 1965;¹ and that all subsequent commentaries add little to our understanding of strategic theory and borrow heavily from the intellectual capital of their predecessors.² In 1971 Colin Gray began to challenge the belief that an intellectual plateau had been reached concerning the impact of nuclear weapons on military strategy.³ While acknowledging that strategic studies literature of the 1950s and 1960s was innovative and of a high calibre, Gray believed that strategic theory was in constant need of revision.⁴

The main impetus for Gray's critique of stable deterrence through MAD was the interaction of emerging strategic, political and technological developments which

¹ Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience*, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1982, especially chapter 4 'The Golden Age', pp.45-58.

² This theme is strongly conveyed in R. Jervis, 'Strategic Theory: What's New and What's True', in Roman Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror*, Allen and Unwin, 1987, pp.47-81; L. Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Macmillan, London, 1981; and B. Brodie, 'The Development of Nuclear Strategy', *International Security*, 2(4), Spring 1978, pp.65-83.

³ Colin S. Gray, 'The Rise and Fall of Academic Strategy', *RUSI Journal*, XVI, June 1971, pp.54-57.

⁴ As early as 1971 Gray opined concerning strategic theory that one of the most dangerous beliefs is 'that a relatively timeless wisdom has been attained', in 'Strategists: Some Views Critical of the Profession', *International Journal*, XXVI, 1970-71, p.790. This has remained a firm belief in all of Gray's writings on strategic studies. See in particular his *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, Aldwych Press, London, 1982. A similar argument is advanced in H. Bull, 'The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1969' in B. Porter (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1960*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1972, pp.30-55.

he alleged undermined the validity of stable deterrence thinking. Consequently, Gray argued that the tenets of 'Golden Age' strategic studies literature required a major theoretical overhaul. Each of these three developments will now be examined as necessary background for a more complete understanding of Gray's critique of MAD and the development of his theory of victory in nuclear war.

Gray argued that the emerging strategic environment of the 1970s would undermine America's ability to fulfil its foreign policy responsibilities especially in deterring and, if necessary, physically denying a Soviet takeover of Western Europe. The attainment by the Soviet Union of rough parity at the strategic nuclear level, together with conventional superiority in the European theatre, made U.S. extended deterrent threats (as embodied in NATO's strategy of Flexible Response) incredible because of the Soviet Union's capacity to retaliate against the American homeland.⁵ Gray was adamant that the geopolitical basis for American national security required the U.S. to develop credible first-use options for its long range nuclear weapons (ICBMs) to support distant allies facing conventional theatre defeat.⁶ American strategic nuclear forces should be able to support credibly U.S. foreign policy objectives. This would require a margin of American strategic superiority similar to that enjoyed in the late 1950s when the U.S. was theoretically capable of unleashing a decisive nuclear assault on the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies without the risk of Soviet nuclear retaliation. As Gray stated in 1972:

Great geopolitical insight is not required to perceive that a status quo, ocean-empire superpower [the United States] needs more raw strategic

⁵ This thesis is discussed at length in Colin S. Gray, 'Mini-Nukes and Strategy', *International Journal*, XXIX, 1973-74, pp.222, 232-233. In 1979 Gray stated 'NATO's central strategic concept, flexible response, is bankrupt', in 'NATO strategy and the Neutron Bomb', *Policy Review*, Winter 1979, p.12. See also his 'NATO's Nuclear Dilemma', *Policy Review*, , 22, Fall 1982, pp.97-116; and 'NATO Defense and Arms-Reduction Proposals', *Military Review*, LXIII(19), October 1983, pp.62-68.

⁶ See *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands, and the Technological Revolution*, National Strategy Information Centre, New York, 1977.

power than does a dissatisfied heartland superpower [the Soviet Union].⁷

The emerging vulnerability of the U.S. homeland to total nuclear devastation would have a paralysing effect on America's freedom of action in the realm of foreign policy.

One of the main assumptions of the strategic stability thesis was that through an extended process of arms control negotiations the United States would educate the Soviet Union on the requirements of stable deterrence. It was widely believed that Soviet strategic doctrine would gradually converge with the prevailing western concept of Assured Destruction.⁸ According to Gray, however, Soviet arms race behaviour during the 1960s, combined with an improved understanding of Soviet doctrinal preferences, demonstrated that the Soviet Union was not content with attaining nuclear parity with the United States in accordance with a guiding principle of strategic stability. Gray became a leading exponent of the view that the Soviet Union 'thinks it could fight and win a nuclear war'.⁹

Several arguments were advanced to support this view. Most importantly the Soviet Union rejected Western deterrence theory and endorsed the notion of 'victory' in nuclear war.¹⁰ This was allegedly demonstrated by the procurement of ICBMs capable of destroying America's land-based missile force, and massive investments in damage limitation capabilities, especially air and civil defence.¹¹ Gray also argued

⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'The Arms Race is About Politics', *Foreign Policy*, 9, Winter 1972-73, p.129. For Gray's first speculative piece on the desirability of strategic superiority for the U.S. see 'Strategic "Superiority" in Superpower Relations', *Military Review*, 21(12), December 1971, pp.8-21.

⁸ John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1973.

⁹ Borrowed from R. Pipes, 'Why the Soviet Union Thinks it can Fight and Win a Nuclear War', *Commentary*, 64(1), July 1977, pp.21-34. For a dissenting view see R. Arnett, 'Soviet Attitudes Toward Nuclear War: Do They Really Think They Can Win?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2(2), September 1979, pp.172-191.

¹⁰ Colin S. Gray, 'The End of SALT? Purpose and Strategy in U.S.-U.S.S.R. Negotiations', *Policy Review*, Fall 1977, pp.31-45.

¹¹ Colin S. Gray, 'From Disarmament to Arms Control, to...What?', *Futures*, 8(6), December 1976, especially pp.528-29.

that the Soviet Union's immediate objective was to erect a counter-deterrent to 'neutralise any political leverage that an apparent strategic superiority might provide for the United States'.¹² The ultimate Soviet goal, however, was to attain strategic superiority over the United States.¹³ Finally, it was argued that the Soviet Union used arms control negotiations as an arena for securing strategic and political advantage.¹⁴

Gray argued that a combination of offensive and defensive technologies emerging in the mid to late 1970s would gradually undermine the assumption of stable deterrence that mutual vulnerability is a permanent condition of the nuclear age:

... strategic options are now becoming available that were not possible when the still dominant notions of the transnational defense community of the West were formulated in the mid 1960s.¹⁵

In particular, technologies for ballistic missiles such as Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs), Manoeuvrable Reentry Vehicles (MARVs) and Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) held the future possibility of offering a significant level of protection for the American homeland.¹⁶ This changing strategic, political and technological landscape provides the setting for Gray's scathing criticisms of 'Golden Age' strategic thinking. Although Gray became increasingly sceptical of concepts such as limited war, crisis management and arms control his most vehement criticism was reserved for the concept at the pinnacle of stable deterrence thinking - MAD.

¹² Colin S. Gray, 'Action and Reaction in the Nuclear Arms Race', *Military Review*, 21(8), August 1971, p.22.

¹³ This is the central argument of Colin S. Gray, 'Soviet Rocket Forces: Military Capability, Political Utility', *Air Force Magazine*, 61(3), March 1978, pp.49-55.

¹⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'Security Through SALT?', *Behind the Headlines*, XXX(3-4), April 1971, pp.1-16; and 'SALT and the American Mood', *Strategic Review*, 11(3), 1975, p.46.

¹⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'The "Second Wave": New Directions in Strategic Studies', *RUSI Journal*, 118(4), 1973, p.39.

¹⁶ For a general discussion by Gray of the technologies emerging in the 1970s and how he perceived they would impact on strategy, see 'New Weapons and the Resort to Force', *International Journal*, XXX(2), Spring 1975, pp.238-258.

The long overdue review of deterrence has been well begun ... by those who ... have at least been galvanised into mental activity by the rigidity and aridity of assured destruction. The intellectual plateau of the early 1960s ... has at long last been discredited.¹⁷

Gray was hasty in his judgement that MAD had been discredited¹⁸ and, consequently, he mounted a persistent campaign against MAD throughout the 1970s.¹⁹

Gray's critique of MAD can be presented as four related charges. Firstly, threats of Assured Destruction lack credibility. A U.S. President would be self-deterred from initiating nuclear operations if such a course of action resulted in hundreds of millions of American casualties. Furthermore, the Soviet Union with its war waging and war survival nuclear strategy would not be sufficiently deterred by U.S. threats to lay waste to a fixed percentage of its population base. Secondly, presuming that the U.S. proceeded to destroy Soviet society, what war time objectives would it hope to achieve if the Soviet Union could retaliate in kind? MAD made no political, military or strategic sense. Thirdly, threats of assured destruction are immoral; they affront the ethical dimensions of warfare and if implemented guarantee the wholesale destruction of Soviet society for the sins of its leaders. Fourthly, MAD cannot address the fundamental question - what nuclear strategy could the U.S. attempt to implement if nuclear deterrence failed or, in the words of Gray, if the Soviet Union was beyond American deterrent influence?²⁰

¹⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'What RAND Hath Wrought', *Foreign Policy*, 4, Fall 1971, p.125.

¹⁸ Adherents to MAD were to make an admirable comeback during the mid 1970s. See Wolfgang K.H. Panofsky, 'The Mutual Hostage Relationship Between America and Russia', *Foreign Affairs*, 52(1), October 1973, pp.109-118; and Jerome H. Kahan, *Security in the Nuclear Age: Developing U.S. Strategic Arms Policy*, Brookings, Washington, D.C., 1975.

¹⁹ Gray also reserved his most colourful language for his critique of MAD. While supporters of MAD were referred to as a 'sickly breed', a deliberate policy of assured destruction would be a 'dereliction of strategic analytical duty' which if implemented would result in an 'orgy of civilian massacre'.

²⁰ The first detailed expression of these criticisms in Gray's writings is 'Unsafe at Any Speed: A Critique of "Stable Deterrence" Doctrine', *RUSI Journal*, 118(2), June 1973, pp.23-217. Also useful is 'Of Bargaining Chips and Building Blocks: Arms Control and Defense Policy', *International Journal*, XXVIII, Spring 1973, pp.266-296.

These criticisms were developed over several years and were presented in varying degrees of intensity. Taken together they implied that, conceptually at least, there was a preferred nuclear strategy that would overcome or avoid the inherent operational deficiencies of MAD. A feature of Gray's critique of MAD was his difficulty in articulating a strategic nuclear doctrine that would

- a. resolve the dilemma of self-deterrence;
- b. achieve set political objectives in time of war;
- c. avoid the indiscriminate killing of Soviet citizens;
- d. provide the U.S. with a range of credible nuclear use options if deterrence failed; and
- e. provide a workable criterion for arms control.

Gray confessed that his article 'Unsafe at Any Speed: A critique of Stable Deterrence' was more concerned with the 'identification of possible folly than ... with the task of providing constructive alternatives'.²¹ Gray echoed this view in a subsequent article by stating:

It is one thing to argue that the dominant strain of reasoning on deterrence ... is morally reprehensible, politically paralysing and military non-sensical, it is quite another to produce a bright and shining alternative that does not contain features rendering it more undesirable than the ideas/posture that it is intended to replace.²²

Indeed Gray could offer no more than a terse summary of the themes to emerge from the works of those strategists critical of MAD,²³ together with an outline of 'a new,

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

²² 'The "Second Wave": New Directions in Strategic Studies', *op.cit.*, p.39.

²³ For example, see Arthur Lee Burns, *Ethics and Deterrence: A Nuclear Balance Without Hostage Cities*, Adelphi Paper No.69, Institute For Strategic Studies, London, July 1970; Michael May, 'Some Advantages of a Counterforce Deterrence', *Orbis*, XIV(2) Summer 1972, pp.271-283; and B.M. Russett, 'A Countercombatant Deterrent? Feasibility, Morality and Arms Control', in S.C. Sarkesian (ed.), *The Military-Industrial Complex: A Reassessment*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, 1972, pp.201-242.

more balanced strategic posture' characterised by a mixture of 'hostage cities', 'defensive' and 'counterforce' doctrines.²⁴

Although the focus of Gray's critique of MAD was on its alleged deficiency as a theory of nuclear deterrence, by 1976, Gray had conceived a rudimentary alternative theory of nuclear deterrence. The extent of his revision to stable deterrence thinking did not proceed beyond two tentative themes. While Soviet leaders might be sufficiently deterred in times of peace by American threats to destroy the Soviet Union, a strategy of Assured Destruction would amount to U.S. defeat in war because the Soviet Union was investing in a substantial capability for damage limitation and was planning for a decisive military and political victory if deterrence failed. The second theme was that a strategy of deterrence must address Soviet, and not American, fears although Gray did not examine the exact nature of official Soviet fears and anxieties and how they would be exploited by the U.S. in an operational strategic nuclear doctrine.

From Nuclear War-Fighting to the Theory of Victory: A Preliminary Analysis

After 1976 the disparate elements of what could loosely be described as a nuclear war-fighting strategy began to gel into a coherent and articulate strategic doctrine to form the basis of Gray's theory of victory. The transition from Gray's critique of MAD to the formulation of a theory of victory in nuclear war can be roughly divided into two phases. Between 1977-78 Gray argued vociferously that for geopolitical reasons the United States required the freedom to initiate limited offensive strategic nuclear operations to support allies facing Soviet military aggression in Europe and its periphery.²⁵ According to Gray, however, the credibility of U.S. extended deterrent threats was being eroded by the emerging condition of mutual vulnerability. American leaders would be self-deterred from using nuclear

²⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'Rethinking Nuclear Strategy', *Orbis*, XVII(4), Winter 1974, pp.1175-1160.

²⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'The Strategic Forces Triad: End of The Road?', *Foreign Affairs*, 56(4), Fall 1978, pp.775-776.

weapons to prevent Soviet expansionism in Europe. More importantly, Gray contended that even if the United States had the desired flexibility in its nuclear targeting doctrine and proceeded to execute its selective nuclear options in time of war, the result would be a process of rapid vertical escalation leading to a Soviet military and political victory.²⁶ The Soviet Union would be free to destroy up to 90 per cent of America's vulnerable land based ICBMs (Titan and Minuteman) in a swift retaliatory strike.

In principle there were two solutions to America's nuclear dilemma as perceived by Gray. The U.S. could either protect its population through a combination of active and passive defenses - physically denying the Soviet Union direct access to the American homeland - or rely on a superior nuclear targeting doctrine and force structure to achieve a favourable war outcome. The first solution was not feasible in the mid-1970s because the required technologies did not exist and the political climate in the U.S. was not conducive to a strategic debate on ballistic missile defence (BMD). Gray neither advanced a strategic case for BMD nor explored in detail the relationship between deterrence and defence. He was preoccupied with devising a nuclear strategy for the United States that would strengthen deterrence in the 1980s and be successfully implemented if deterrence failed without any defensive coverage for the American homeland.

The key to Gray's nuclear war-fighting strategy was the deployment of a survivable land-based counterforce ICBM capable of destroying the most highly valued military and political assets of the Soviet state. This was the basis of Gray's support for the MX (Missile Experimental) ICBM throughout the 1970s and 1980s.²⁷

²⁶ *Ibid.*, especially pp.775-776.

²⁷ See Gray's 'Soviet-American Strategic Competition: Instruments, Doctrines, and Purposes' in Robert J. Pranger and Roger P. Labrie (eds), *Nuclear Strategy and National Security: Points of View*, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington DC, 1977, pp.278-301; 'The MX Debate', *Survival*, XX(3), May/June 1978, pp.105-112; 'Does Theory Lead Technology?', *International Journal*, XXXIII(3), Summer 1978, p.522; 'The MX ICBM and Nuclear Strategy', *International Defense Review*, 14(7), 1981, pp.855-862. The extent of Gray's support for MX can be gauged by his

But Gray did not advocate MX as a first strike or pre-emptive weapon to disarm the Soviet Union. He argued that MX should be deployed as a secure second strike counterforce weapon designed to deter Soviet vertical escalation following an American campaign of limited and selective nuclear strikes. According to Gray, the Soviet Union would not deliberately embark on a process of nuclear escalation knowing that it could not destroy a survivably deployed MX and that such an ICBM could in turn promptly retaliate against the essential assets of the Soviet state, thus thwarting its war time objectives. Such a targeting doctrine would allegedly strengthen deterrence by enhancing Soviet pre-war anxieties.²⁸

Gray had barely elaborated this nuclear war-fighting strategy of Soviet 'victory denial' when dissatisfaction with its key operational features began to surface in his writings. Gray became convinced that an American strategy of Soviet victory denial in an era of mutual vulnerability would not sufficiently overcome the problem of self-deterrence inherent in nuclear threats that risk intolerable levels of destruction to one's homeland. Furthermore, victory denial was judged to be an inferior strategic objective. At best, it would not enable the United States to force a favourable war outcome while at worst it would threaten a U.S. defeat because of the Soviet Union's capability to escalate to higher levels of violence.

These deficiencies prompted Gray to refine his strategic thinking. By 1979 he reached two important conclusions that determined the course of his strategic advocacy during the 1980s. Firstly, the only circumstances where an American President could credibly and sensibly sanction the employment of offensive strategic nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union would be those in which the U.S. could

succinct letters sent to the editors of several prominent American newspapers - 'Defense: What the MX is All About', *New York Times*, 19 October 1977, p.24; 'What the MX Would do to Soviet Defense Planners', *New York Times*, 16 April 1980, p.A26; 'Why the U.S. Needs the MX in its Future', *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 September 1982, p.23; 'We Need the MX, for Deterrence and Stability', *New York Times*, 12 November 1982, p.A26.

²⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'SALT: Why we Must "Enhance Soviet Anxiety"', *New York Times*, 16 January 1977, p.18.

offer a substantial measure of physical protection for the American homeland from nuclear retaliation.²⁹ Secondly, the United States' primary strategic objective in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union should be the forcible dissolution of the Soviet state. Targeting the Soviet state should have the maximum deterrent influence on the minds of its political and military leaders. How would the U.S. devise its nuclear war plan, the SIOP, to fulfil this demanding strategic objective? According to Gray:

To defeat the Soviet state, the United States must plan to degrade and destroy its assets. Preeminent among these assets are: the respect of the Soviet peoples, the military forces of the state; the police and paramilitary forces of the state, the civilian command apparatus (party and governmental - at all levels).³⁰

Physically protecting the American homeland with strategic, air and civil defences, and targeting the Soviet state apparatus with long range nuclear weapons are the key components of Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war. Gray articulated his war-winning strategy in 'Nuclear Strategy: The Case For a Theory of Victory'³¹ and reiterated his thesis in an article titled 'Victory is Possible', co-authored with Keith Payne.³²

The United States should plan to defeat the Soviet Union and to do so at a cost that would not prohibit U.S. recovery. Washington should identify war aims that in the last resort would contemplate the

²⁹ See the concluding paragraphs to Colin S. Gray, 'The MX ICBM: Why We Need It', *Air Force Magazine*, 62(8), August 1979, pp.66-71.

³⁰ Colin S. Gray, 'Soviet Strategic Vulnerabilities', *Air Force Magazine*, 62(3), March 1979, pp.60-64. In the late 1970s, Gray exerted most of his energies on strategic nuclear targeting issues and was indirectly involved in the targeting reviews undertaken by the Carter Administration. For example, Daniel Ford noted that Gray was a participant in a series of 'Internal Conferences on War Aims and Strategic Forces' conducted in 1979-80 under the auspices of TRW 'a major defense contractor with strong connections to the Reagan Administration', cited in *The Button: The Nuclear Trigger - Does it Work?* Counterpoint, London, 1986, p.128.

³¹ *International Security*, 4(1), Summer 1979, pp.54-87.

³² *Foreign Policy*, 39, Summer 1980, pp.140-27. For a brief summary of the theory of victory see, in addition to the two articles cited above, Gray's 'The Military Requirements of US Strategy', *Military Review*, LIX(9), September 1979, pp.2-13 and 'Strategic Forces and SALT: A Question of Strategy', *Comparative Strategy*, 2, Summer 1980, pp.123-124.

destruction of Soviet political authority and the emergence of a postwar world order compatible with Western values.³³

Although Gray claimed to be offering a clear and obtainable nuclear war-time objective for the United States - political victory - Stephen Kull is correct in noting that Gray and Payne provide no detail of how the United States would emerge victorious from global nuclear war.³⁴ Three years later, through a series of penetrating interviews with high level American strategic thinkers throughout the Department of Defence and State, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The National Security Council, Congress and Washington's influential defence think tanks, Steven Kull demonstrated that while advocates of victory in nuclear war develop articulate arguments in writing they are reduced to incoherence and confusion when pressed to enunciate the exact meaning of 'victory' in nuclear war.³⁵

Gray presented his theory of victory as the only operational nuclear strategy where the United States could achieve set political objectives based on a superior theory of nuclear deterrence. He did this by framing his discussion with two questions. What would Soviet leaders find most deterring in nuclear war: the certainty of widespread urban/industrial destruction or the prospect of losing central political authority at home? And, what strategy would it be in the United States' interest to implement if deterrence failed resulting in a military confrontation between the superpowers? Gray argued that through targeting the Soviet State apparatus with long range offensive nuclear weapons and offering a significant level of physical protection for the American population, pre-war deterrence would be strengthened and the threat of nuclear war would recede. Gray defended the theory of victory with two additional arguments. If deterrence failed completely (i.e. the Soviet Union is

³³ 'Victory is Possible', *op.cit.*, p.21.

³⁴ Steven Kull, 'Nuclear Nonsense', *Foreign Policy*, 58, Spring 1985, p.39.

³⁵ Steven Kull, *Minds at War: Nuclear Reality and the Inner Conflict of Defense Policymakers*, Basic Books, New York, 1988. It is worth mentioning that Kull conducted interviews at the National Institute for Public Policy when Colin Gray was President.

beyond American deterrent influence or the 'fog of war' results in rapid escalation) the U.S. would have no choice but to wage nuclear war as effectively as possible. A war-winning strategy, therefore, provides insurance against the possibility of deterrence failure. The theory of victory was also judged to be a morally acceptable strategy which satisfactorily addressed the Just War principles of the Catholic Church, especially those of discrimination, proportionality and non-combatant immunity.³⁶

After 1980, the most persistent claim in Gray's writings is that he was compelled by 'strategic logic' to go beyond the requirements of a war-fighting strategy, such as limited nuclear war for intra-war deterrence, to advocate a war winning or classical strategy.³⁷ Gray is wholly supportive of flexibility and selectivity in strategic nuclear targeting doctrine.³⁸ He argues strongly, however, that a capability to execute limited nuclear options (LNOs) is by itself deficient when divorced from an overall plan of how the U.S. could achieve 'escalation dominance' and force war termination upon the Soviet Union on terms favourable to the United States.³⁹ Gray is very critical of strategies for limited nuclear war when, either, they are informed by a theory of deterrence which sanctions as its ultimate dissuasive

³⁶ 'Victory is Possible', *op.cit.*, pp.16-17. It is worth noting that in all of Gray's subsequent writings on nuclear strategy the theory of victory is defended with strategic, rather than moral, arguments. Keith Payne, however, has pursued the moral case for a nuclear war winning strategy. See 'The Bishops and Nuclear Weapons', *Orbis*, 37(3), Fall 1983, pp.535-543; 'What I Did and Did Not Say, and Why: Reply to Russett', *Orbis*, 38(2), Summer 1984, pp.404-498; Keith B. Payne and Karl I. Payne, *A Just Defense: The Use of Force, Nuclear Weapons and Our Conscience*, Multnomah Press, Portland, 1987.

³⁷ See in particular 'Issues and Non-Issues in the Nuclear Policy Debate', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 37(10), December 1981, p.48.

³⁸ In 1982 Gray stated bluntly 'I am frequently puzzled about what the preferred nuclear strategy of a strong critic of limited nuclear war planning would be ... In truth, we are all advocates of limited nuclear war planning (for deterrence) because there is no choice. The supposed debate over limited nuclear war is really no debate at all'. Cited in 'Dangerous To Your Health: The Debate Over Nuclear Strategy and War', *Orbis*, 26(2), Spring 1982, pp.344-345.

³⁹ For a detailed explanation of how American strategic superiority could be used to achieve 'escalation dominance' see Colin S. Gray 'The Idea of Strategic Superiority', *Air Force Magazine*, 65(3) March 1982, pp.62-63; 'SALT II: The Real Debate', *Policy Review*, 10, Fall 1979, pp.11-12; and 'The Strategic Implications of the Nuclear Balance', in Richard F. Staar (ed.), *Arms Control: Myth Versus Reality*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1984, pp.28, 36

threat the destruction of Soviet society or, they rely on Soviet cooperation and bargaining for the restoration of deterrence into war itself. It is most unlikely that the Soviet Union would conform to American rules for the conduct of limited and controlled nuclear war, because Soviet strategic nuclear planning is guided by the clear objective of achieving a swift military and political victory.⁴⁰ According to Gray, American nuclear strategy will only be operationally sound if strategic planning is conducted from the top down. In other words, without a plausible theory of victory or war termination, planning for limited nuclear war makes little sense and is likely to fail in time of war.

A basic truth concerning strategic targeting design is that the credibility, effectiveness, and real-time attractiveness of lower level ... strike options has to be a function of the credibility and assessed probable effectiveness of the entire strategic targeting design.⁴¹

There were no noteworthy additions to Gray's strategic theory in the early to mid 1980s. Practically all his writings subsequent to the two theory of victory articles in 1979 and 1980 promote and defend his strategic advocacy, especially the

⁴⁰ This view is conveyed in Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Selective Nuclear Options in American and Soviet Strategic Policy*, RAND, Santa Monica, R-2034-DDRE, December 1976; and Desmond Ball, 'Soviet Strategic Planning and the Control of Nuclear War', in Roman Kolkowicz and Ellen Propper Mickiewicz (eds), *The Soviet Calculus of Nuclear War*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1986, pp.49-67. Several analysts believe that the Soviet Union would be interested in waging nuclear war with control and discrimination. See Albert Wohlstetter, 'Between An Unfree World and None: Increasing Our Choices', *Foreign Affairs*, 63(5), Summer 1985, pp.962-964; and Notra Trulock III, 'Soviet Perspectives on Limited Nuclear Warfare' in Fred S. Hoffman, Albert Wohlstetter and David S. Yost (eds), *Swords and Shields: NATO, the USSR, and New Choices For Long-Range Offense and Defense*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1987, pp.53-85. However, the weight of evidence strongly suggests otherwise.

⁴¹ Colin Gray, 'Targeting Problems For Central War', *Naval War College Review*, 33(1), January-February 1980, pp.3-21. This thesis is restated in 'Strategic Forces, General Purpose Forces, and Crisis Management', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 457, September 1981, p.74; 'Forward' in Keith B. Payne, *Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. - Soviet Relations*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, XIV; and in the correspondence between Michael Howard and Colin Gray in 'Perspectives on Fighting a Nuclear War', *International Security*, 6(1), Summer 1981, p.186.

importance of population defenses for the efficacy of deterrence⁴² and the necessity of a nuclear war-winning strategy.⁴³ Up to 1986, the most significant development was Gray providing a label for his theory of victory - Damage Limitation For Deterrence and Coercion - as a means of contrasting his strategic preferences with rival positions.⁴⁴

The Theory of Victory and American Nuclear Strategy 1962-1989

Gray's theory of victory initially appeared more novel than a close reading would have otherwise suggested and to be on the fringe of mainstream thinking in the Carter Administration and the extra-official strategic studies community. Set against a background of American strategic nuclear doctrine from the early 1960s and the works of several influential strategists, however, it becomes clear that Gray's strategic advocacy was far less extreme than the title 'victory is possible' might have led one to believe. This proposition needs to be further examined.

Gray's central argument - that U.S. nuclear strategy should move towards a theory of victory - appeared an extreme thesis simply because much of his argumentation was built upon a critique of MAD, the antithesis of the theory of victory.⁴⁵ The intellectual antecedents of Gray's strategic thinking were clearly

⁴² Particularly revealing are Gray's written statements to the U.S. Congress. See U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings, *Strategic Defense and National Security*, 98th Congress, 1st Session, 10 November 1983, pp.100-146; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings, *Strategic Defense Initiative*, 98th Congress, 2nd Session, 24 April 1984, pp.3075-3128; and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, *SDI Policy Issues*, 99th Congress, 1st Session, 22 April 1985, pp.401-427. See in addition Colin S. Gray and Keith B. Payne, 'Nuclear Policy and the Defensive Transition', *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1984, pp.820-842; and Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic Defense, Deterrence and the Prospects for Peace', *Ethics*, 95(3) April 1985, pp.659-672.

⁴³ Colin S. Gray, 'Defense, War-Fighting and Deterrence', *Naval War College Review*, XXXV(4) July-August 1982, pp.38-43; 'War-Fighting For Deterrence', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 7(1), March 1984, pp.5-28.

⁴⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 1984, pp.79-86.

⁴⁵ A point highlighted by Philip K. Lawrence, *Preparing For Armageddon: A Critique of Western Strategy*, Wheatsheaf Books, Sussex, 1988, p.141.

articulated by Herman Kahn and Donald Brennan in their respective writings on nuclear strategy during the 1960s. Kahn had been a long time exponent of the view that the United States 'think about the unthinkable', meaning it should plan to fight, survive and win a nuclear war if deterrence failed.⁴⁶ Brennan influenced the direction of Gray's thinking because he was one of the first strategists to examine in detail the relationship between population defenses and deterrence.⁴⁷ Advocates of victory in nuclear war can even be traced to the dawn of the nuclear age.⁴⁸

More importantly, Gray's almost exclusive focus on attempting to undermine the foundations of stable deterrence thinking drew attention away from the vital fact that American strategic nuclear doctrine had never resembled Assured Destruction. At no stage in the development of American nuclear war plans was targeting doctrine preoccupied solely with the decimation of Soviet urban/industrial centres.⁴⁹ Since the early 1960s and up to the time Gray developed his theory of victory, the U.S. adhered to a nuclear war-fighting strategy which emphasised flexibility and control to prevent all out nuclear war and keep damage to the American homeland at a minimum level.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ H. Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960; *Thinking About the Unthinkable*, Horizon Press, New York, 1962.

⁴⁷ Donald G. Brennan, 'The Case For Missile Defense', *Foreign Affairs*, 43(3), April 1969, pp.633-648.

⁴⁸ William Liscum Borden, *There Will Be No time: The Revolution in Strategy*, Macmillan, New York, 1946.

⁴⁹ See the two thoroughly researched articles by David Alan Rosenberg, "'A Smoking Radiating Ruin at the End of Two Hours': Documents on American Plans for Nuclear War With the Soviet Union, 1954-1955", *International Security*, 6(3) Winter 1981/82, pp.3-38; and 'The Origins of Overkill: Nuclear Weapons and American Strategy, 1945-60', *International Security*, 7(4), Spring 1983, pp.3-71.

⁵⁰ A.L. Friedberg, 'A History of the U.S. Strategic "Doctrine" - 1945-1980', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 3(3), December 1980, pp.37-71; Desmond Ball, 'U.S. Strategic Forces: How Would They Be Used?', *International Security*, 7(3), Winter 1982/83, pp.31-60; *Targeting For Strategic Deterrence*, Adelphi Paper No.185, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1983; Leon Sloss and Marc Dean Millot, 'U.S. Nuclear Strategy in Evolution', *Strategic Review*, 12(1), Winter 1984, pp.19-28. For an excellent account of the role of civilian strategists in the formulation of strategic nuclear concepts and doctrines see F. Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983.

Soon after the Kennedy Administration entered office in January 1961, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara presided over a fundamental revision of SIOP-62, a war plan for the simultaneous launching of 3,500 nuclear weapons at an 'optimum mix' of military and civilian targets in the Soviet Union.⁵¹ McNamara wanted flexibility in the SIOP to provide the United States with a wider range of attack options, ranging from Soviet strategic nuclear weapons, bomber bases and submarine tenders to an all out urban/industrial nuclear assault (which was the least preferred option).⁵² In an address to European allies on 16 June 1962, McNamara provided the clearest statement of what became known as the 'No-Cities' strategy.

The United States has come to the conclusion that, to the extent feasible, basic military strategy in a possible general nuclear war should be approached in much the same way that more conventional military operations have been regarded in the past. That is to say, principle military objectives in the event of a nuclear war ... should be the destruction of the enemy's military forces, and not his civilian population.⁵³

He concluded by saying that the use of force against the cities of a major power would be 'tantamount to suicide'.⁵⁴ The 'No-Cities' strategy was codified in SIOP-63 which took effect on 1 August 1962.⁵⁵ The U.S. objective in nuclear war would be to initially target the Soviet Union's military establishment with deliberation and control and purposely refrain from striking Soviet cities. The rationale was to hold Soviet cities hostage to restore intra-war deterrence by threatening their destruction with the large percentage of strategic forces held in reserve.⁵⁶

⁵¹ D. Rosenberg, 'Reality and Responsibility: Power and Process in the Making of United States Nuclear Strategy, 1945-68', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 9(1), March 1986, p.43.

⁵² Desmond Ball, *Targeting For Strategic Deterrence*, *op.cit.*, pp.10-14.

⁵³ 'Nuclear Weapons in Western Defence: Address by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Ann Arbor, June 16 1962' in R. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations 1962*, Harper and Row, New York, 1963, p.233.

⁵⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of SIOP-63 see Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op.cit.*, pp.62-70.

⁵⁶ This rationale is explained in A. Enthoven, 'American Deterrent Policy', Address to the Loyola University Forum for National Affairs, Los Angeles, 10

In his public and official addresses, McNamara soon began to deemphasise the 'no-cities' strategy. Between 1964-66, declaratory policy was a mixture of Assured Destruction and Damage Limitation but by 1967, McNamara's rhetoric focused exclusively on Assured Destruction.⁵⁷ There were several reasons why McNamara publicly abandoned his 'no-cities' strategy. Apart from widespread criticism in the United States and by several European allies,⁵⁸ McNamara realised that the prospects of limiting damage to the American homeland through counterforce reprisals would become less feasible as the Soviet Union acquired more invulnerable strategic nuclear forces. With the prospect of nuclear parity a strategy of damage limitation through counterforce targeting became less viable.⁵⁹ In addition, McNamara's strategy relied on weapon systems and Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence (C³I) facilities that had not been developed. The theoretical discussions of controlled and limited nuclear war were overshadowed by technological constraints. Finally, and most importantly, the goal of destroying Soviet strategic forces so as to make an appreciable difference to the number of Americans surviving a Soviet retaliatory strike, generated an open ended requirement for more Minuteman ICBMs and the procurement of a force of supersonic reconnaissance strike bombers.⁶⁰

It is important to stress that McNamara's emphasis on Assured Destruction after 1967 in no way resembled actual strategic nuclear doctrine. Assured Destruction was distinctly declaratory policy.⁶¹ U.S. targeting doctrine - as codified in SIOP-63 with its emphasis on flexibility and restraint - remained unchanged until the mid 1970s, when a detailed review of strategic doctrine under the Nixon Administration

February 1963, *Survival*, 5(3), May/June 1963, pp.94-101; W. Kaufman, *The McNamara Strategy*, Harper and Row, New York, 1964.

⁵⁷ Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op.cit.*, pp.68-69.

⁵⁸ A vocal critic of the 'No-Cities' strategy was Michael Brower. See his two articles 'Controlled Thermonuclear War', *The New Republic*, 30 July 1962, pp.9-15, and 'Nuclear Strategy of the Kennedy Administration', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 18(10), October 1962, pp.34-41.

⁵⁹ D. Rosenberg, 'Reality and Responsibility', *op.cit.*, p.46.

⁶⁰ Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op.cit.*, p.68.

⁶¹ A. Enthoven, '1963 Nuclear Strategy Revisited' in H.P. Ford and F. Williams (eds), *Ethics and Nuclear Strategy?*, Orbis, New York, 1977, pp.72-81.

resulted in the formulation of a revised nuclear war plan, SIOP-5, which took effect on 1 January 1976.⁶² A feature of SIOP-5 was its emphasis on targeting those Soviet political, economic and military assets that would facilitate post war recovery. In addition, the concept 'Escalation Control' became an overriding policy objective. According to Desmond Ball, this would enable the National Command Authority (NCA) 'to execute their options in a deliberate and controlled fashion throughout the progress of a strategic nuclear exchange'.⁶³ The targeting review undertaken between 1969 and 1974 resulted in Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger promulgating a new declaratory policy characterised by 'selective options' and 'flexibility in targeting'.⁶⁴ Schlesinger effectively buried Assured Destruction as declaratory policy.

Providing an overview of American nuclear strategy in the 1960s and mid 1970s demonstrates that when Gray first advocated his theory of victory in 1979, both U.S. strategic nuclear doctrine and declaratory policy had moved far beyond the concept of Assured Destruction. Similarities between American nuclear strategy and the theory of victory could, therefore, be identified. They both embraced the need for controlled and selective nuclear options and deemphasised the targeting of Soviet cities. However, the most important operational requirements of the theory of victory - targeting the Soviet State apparatus and affording protection for the American population against nuclear missile attack through active and passive defenses - had not yet received official endorsement as priority strategic objectives (even though Soviet leadership centres were codified in SIOP-5 for the purpose of intra-war deterrence and intra-war bargaining).⁶⁵ At the beginning of 1981, Colin Gray's

⁶² For details see Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op.cit.*, pp.70-75.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁶⁴ 'Excerpts from the Press Conference of U.S. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, 10 January 1974', *Survival*, 16(2), March/April 1974, pp.86-90. For a detailed critique see Desmond J. Ball, 'Deja Vu: The Return to Counterforce in the Nixon Administration: (Or, the Politics of Potential Nuclear Castration) in Robert O'Neill (ed.), *The Strategic Nuclear Balance: An Australian Perspective*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, 1974, pp.149-232.

⁶⁵ Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op. cit.*, p.73.

theory of victory remained a well articulated strategic nuclear doctrine offered as a superior theory of nuclear deterrence but it was publicly supported by only a restricted number of individuals.⁶⁶

In 1981 the Reagan Administration entered office voicing a strong anti-Soviet rhetoric and a pledge to restore America's alleged declining military power base. Indeed, a record level of peacetime defence spending together with a sharp downturn in Soviet-American political relations were features of the first Reagan Administration's defence and foreign policies. Many of those individuals who gained notoriety during the 1970s for espousing alarmist views on Soviet military power and the nuclear imbalance tilting in favour of the Soviet Union, were recruited into key national security and arms control advisory positions in the Reagan Administration.⁶⁷

Gray was offered the position of consultant to the State Department on Arms Control and became a member of the General Advisory Committee to the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency⁶⁸ (a position he held until 1988). It is generally acknowledged that Gray influenced official thinking on national security issues and that his thesis on war-fighting deterrence was in general accord with the strategic priorities of the Reagan Administration. As Gray acknowledged in 1981,

It does so happen that the argument in my recent articles in *International Security* ['The Case for a Theory of Victory'] and *Foreign Policy* ['Victory is Possible'] are about as close to current U.S. official ... thinking as one is likely to find anywhere in the public domain.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Support for Gray's theory of victory in the literature can be located in Keith B. Payne, 'Deterrence, Arms Control and U.S. Strategic Doctrine', *Orbis*, 25(3), Fall 1981, pp.747-770; *Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. - Soviet Relations*, op.cit.; Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Renewal of Strategy', in Samuel P. Huntington (ed.), *The Strategic Imperative: New Policies For American Security*, Ballinger, Cambridge, Mass., 1982, especially p.12.

⁶⁷ This is especially true for members of the Committee on the Present Danger. For the Committee's publications since its inception on 11 November 1976 to 1984 see Charles Tyroler III (ed.), *Alerting America: The Papers of the Committee on the Present Danger*, Pergamon Brasseys, Washington, 1984.

⁶⁸ Robert Scheer, *With Enough Shovels: Reagan, Bush and Nuclear War*, Vintage Books, New York, 1983, pp.34-35.

⁶⁹ Colin Gray, 'Chacun a son gout', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 37(6), June/July 1981, p.6J.

Throughout the 1980s it was not surprising that Gray supported the Administration's arms build-up and staunchly defended its record on arms control.⁷⁰ Even Gray's contribution to debates on issues as diverse as the nuclear freeze movement, the nuclear winter thesis and alleged Soviet violations of arms control agreements echoed the rhetoric emanating from the American defence establishment.⁷¹ It would be misleading to overstate the impact of one government advisor on a process such as the formulation and codification of strategic nuclear doctrine which is influenced more by the complex interplay of bureaucratic, political and technological factors than by the wishes of civilian strategists.⁷² While specific examples do highlight Gray's direct input into official guidance for strategic doctrine,⁷³ there are many instances where Gray's advocacy had no impact on the decision making process.⁷⁴ It remains

⁷⁰ Colin S. Gray and Jeffrey G. Barlow, 'Inexcusable Restraint: The Decline of American Military Power in the 1970s', *International Security*, 10(2), Fall 1985, pp.27-69; Colin S. Gray, 'We Told Him to Build and He Did', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 November 1987, p.9; 'President Reagan Should Stick to His Guns on Arms Control', *Los Angeles Times*, 9 January 1983, Part V, p.3; 'The Reagan Administration and Arms Control', in Desmond Ball and Andrew Mack (eds), *The Future of Arms Control*, Australian National University Press, Sydney, 1987, pp.45-66.

⁷¹ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Freeze?', *Parameters*, XIII(2), June 1983, p.74-80; Colin S. Gray and Keith B. Payne (eds), *The Nuclear Freeze Controversy*, Abt Books, Lanham, 1984; Colin S. Gray, 'The Nuclear Winter Thesis and U.S. Strategic Policy', *Washington Quarterly*, 8(3), Summer 1985, pp.85-96. For Gray's views on Soviet Treaty violations see 'Moscow is Cheating', *Foreign Policy*, 56, Fall 1984, pp.141-152; 'Verification of Non-Compliance: The Problem of Response', *Defense Science 2003+*, 4(5), October/November 1985, pp.29-39; 'Nuclear Delusions: Six Arms Control Fallacies', *Policy Review*, 37, Summer 1986, especially pp.50-51. See also Gray's latest contribution to the issue of arms control verification, 'Does Verification Really Matter? Facing Political Facts About Arms Control Non Compliance', *Strategic Review*, XVIII(2), Spring 1990, pp.32-42.

⁷² Desmond Ball, *The Evolution of United States Strategic Policy Since 1945: Doctrine, Military Technical Innovation and Force Structure*, Reference Paper No.164, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, January 1989; and David Alan Rosenberg, 'U.S. Nuclear Strategy: Theory vs Practice', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 44(3), March 1987, pp.20-26.

⁷³ Gray is alleged to have contributed to the drafting of the 1982 five year Defence Guidance Plan. See L. Wieseltier, *Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1983, p.51.

⁷⁴ Drawing on a specific example, despite Gray's strong endorsement of strong defence it has been clearly demonstrated that think tanks such as the National Institute for Public Policy had no influence on President Reagan's decision to proceed with the Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983. See David Carlton, 'Rendering Nuclear Weapons Impotent and Obsolete: The Origins of a

impossible to precisely calculate the influence of Gray's strategic thinking on the direction of American nuclear strategy during President Reagan's two terms in office.

There is considerable merit in the following judgement by Stephen Cimbala:

... a close reading of Gray's contributions to the strategic debate suggests that he is not so deviant from the mainstream of U.S. strategic thinking as critics have supposed. Gray has in fact been influential precisely because the mainstream has moved in directions congenial to his suggestions, although undoubtedly not as far as he might wish.⁷⁵

The strategic arguments used to develop the theory of victory thesis received increasing official recognition from within the Reagan Administration, and during the 1980s, three important developments resulted in Gray's strategic preferences gaining representation in America's nuclear war plan, the SIOP. Firstly, the Reagan Administration inherited what was known as Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59), a document providing guidance for strategic nuclear doctrine that evolved from several major reviews and studies conducted between 1977-79, the most important being the Nuclear Targeting Policy Review (NTPR) Study headed by Leon Sloss.⁷⁶ PD-59 was not a radical departure from previous targeting doctrines; rather it represented a further stage in the evolution of American strategic nuclear doctrine towards a refined war-fighting strategy, especially in the provision of more controlled and selective nuclear options in the SIOP.⁷⁷ Quite predictably, the Reagan Administration undertook its own review of nuclear targeting policy in 1981, resulting in the formulation of a new SIOP (SIOP-6) taking effect on 1 October 1983. Military and

Pipedream' in Margaret Blunden and Owen Greene (eds), *Science and Mythology in the Making of Defence Policy*, Brassey's Defence Publishers, London, 1989, pp.61-76.

⁷⁵ Stephen J. Cimbala, *Extended Deterrence: The United States and NATO Europe*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1987, p.19. This view is shared by Philip Lawrence in his reply to Gerald Segal. See 'A Reply', *Review of International Studies*, 11(3), 1985, p.241.

⁷⁶ Jeffrey Richelson, 'PD-59, NSDD-13 and the Reagan Strategic Modernization program', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 6(2), 1983, pp.128-129.

⁷⁷ For useful discussions of PD-59 see Desmond Ball, 'PD-59: A Strategic Critique', *FAS Public Interest Report*, October 1980, pp.5-6; and Milton Leitenberg, 'Presidential Directive (P.D.) 59: The United States Nuclear Weapon Targeting Policy', *Journal of Peace Research*, XVIII(4), 1981, pp.309-317.

political leadership targets in the Soviet Union were officially designated as one of the four target groups, the other three being Soviet nuclear forces, general purpose forces and the Soviet economic and industrial base.⁷⁸

Secondly, following the ABM debate in the late 1960s, Ballistic Missile Defence was never prominent issue in American defence debates. The continuing official reluctance to embrace a damage limitation strategy through a nation-wide deployed ballistic missile defence had been the basis of Gray's criticism of extant U.S. nuclear strategy from the time of SIOP-5 in 1976, although he was wholly supportive of the trend towards greater flexibility and selectivity in targeting doctrine.⁷⁹ On 23 March 1983, President Reagan unveiled his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), initially a five year research program to establish whether a non-nuclear, multi-tiered, space-based defence providing complete protection for the American population was technologically feasible.⁸⁰ Although the debate over SDI shifted from an emphasis on population defences to the desirability of point defences for ballistic missile sites, the National Command Authority and other similar targets, it did result in the first official directive for the American scientific community to find the means to protect the American population from nuclear missile attack.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Desmond Ball, 'The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983', *op.cit.*, p.80-81.

⁷⁹ See in particular Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Strategy: The Debate Moves On', *RUSI Journal*, 121, March 1976, pp.44-50; 'Presidential Directive 59: Flawed But Useful', *Parameters*, XI(1), March 1981, pp.29-37; Gray's contribution to 'Debate and Discussion: New U.S. Nuclear Strategy', *Baltimore Sun*, 20 September 1980, p.14; and 'Mobilization For High-Level Conflict: Policy Issues', in Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Uri Ra'anani (eds), *The U.S. Defense Mobilization Infrastructure: Problems and Priorities*, Archon Books, Hamden, 1983, p.36-37.

⁸⁰ Two excellent collections of essays on the SDI debate can be found in Steven E. Miller and Stephen Van Era (eds), *The Star Wars Controversy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986; and Samuel F. Wells, Jr, and Robert S. Litwak (eds), *Strategic Defenses and Soviet American Relations*, Ballinger Publishing Co., Cambridge, Mass, 1987.

⁸¹ Official guidance was provided in the policy document NSDD-119 of 6 January 1984.

Thirdly, a new U.S. SIOP (SIOP-6F) came into effect on 1 October 1989.⁸² While the new nuclear war plan is essentially a more refined version of previous targeting doctrines it represents, according to Desmond Ball and Robert Toth, the most far-reaching and important change 'in both the substance and structure of the U.S. strategic nuclear war plan since the preparation of SIOP-63 in 1961-62'.⁸³ Arguably the most controversial aspect of the new targeting doctrine is the emphasis placed on destroying the Soviet leadership, especially the provision of prompt counter-leadership targeting options. The priority accorded counter-leadership targeting in SIOP-6F is unprecedented and raises a variety of important issues such as its likely impact on deterrence stability, its technological feasibility and its implications for nuclear war termination. SIOP-6F brings U.S. targeting doctrine further into line with Gray's strategic advocacy.

Although the convergence between American nuclear strategy and Gray's theory of victory gradually accelerated during the 1980s, to a point where the U.S. appeared to be acquiring the military capability to defeat the Soviet Union in a protracted nuclear conflict, the essential requirements for American victory in nuclear war cannot be fulfilled today. The United States is neither capable of physically limiting the amount of destruction the Soviet Union could wreak upon the American homeland at any stage of a nuclear exchange, nor can it effectively target the essential assets of the Soviet state so as to ensure a political victory. American strategic doctrine as embodied in SIOP-6F falls far short of Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war. Gray has failed to have his preferred strategy - Damage Limitation for Deterrence and Coercion - converted into 'men, machines, organisation and operational plans'.⁸⁴ Two important questions remain unanswered. What is the

⁸² The most comprehensive discussion of SIOP-6F is Desmond Ball and Robert C. Toth, 'Revising the SIOP: Taking War-Fighting to Dangerous Extremes', *International Security*, 14(4), Spring 1990, pp.65-92.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.66.

⁸⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic Ideas and Defense Policy: The Organizational Nexus' in R.A. Beaumont and M. Edmonds (eds), *War in the Next Decade*, University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, 1974, p.90.

likelihood of the U.S. endorsing a theory of victory in nuclear war at some future date? And, are the technologies and operational requirements of Gray's nuclear war winning strategy attainable? A detailed response to these questions will occupy most of Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORY OF VICTORY UNDER ATTACK: CRITICISMS WITHIN THE STRATEGIC STUDIES COMMUNITY

Colin Gray's 'Nuclear Strategy: The Case For a Theory of Victory' (1979) and 'Victory is Possible' (1980) have made a significant impact in debates on the direction of American nuclear strategy within the strategic studies community.¹ This chapter will examine Gray's theory of victory as critiqued in strategic studies literature, including Gray's response to the various charges levelled against his thesis. The objective is to demonstrate that while the critics reveal political and technological problems in Gray's war-winning strategy and allege its negative impact on strategic stability, their arguments do not amount to an overwhelming case against Gray's theory of victory. Rather, the critique should be viewed as a loose collection of criticisms which fail to penetrate beneath the surface of Gray's reasoning. Consequently, Gray has been able to invoke unchallenged the assumptions of the theory of victory to repudiate the claims of his critics and present his thesis more vigorously. Taken together, the criticisms remain deficient because they leave unscathed a framework of assumptions and beliefs which provide the rationale for Gray's theory of victory.

¹ For attempts to position Gray's war-winning strategy in the spectrum of debates over nuclear strategy see Robert E. Osgood, *The Nuclear Dilemma in American Strategic Thought*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1988, pp.20-40, 73-77; and P. Ifestos, *Nuclear Strategy and European Security Dilemmas: Towards an Autonomous European Defense System*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1988, pp.140-165. An excellent discussion is Charles Glasser, 'Why Do Strategists Disagree About the Requirements of Strategic Nuclear Deterrence', in Lyn Eden and Steve E. Miller (eds), *Nuclear Arguments: Understanding the Strategic Nuclear Arms Race and Arms Control Debates*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1989, pp.109-172. For an interesting account by a well known Soviet analyst of American strategic issues see Genrikh Trofimenko, *The U.S. Military Doctrine*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1986, pp.91-146.

The Theory of Victory: Political and Technological Feasibility

Commentators critical of Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war fall into two groups. Some commentators derided Gray without supporting argumentation. For example, Richard Falk labelled Gray as 'the most unbalanced nuclear extremist that [is] currently loose in our midst'² without any explanation. Arthur Cox described Gray's theory of victory as a 'concoction of fantasies based on sheer madness' adding that, 'the tragedy about Mr Gray and other Reagan strategists who share the same view is that they are taken seriously'.³ Like Falk, Cox did not substantiate his claims.

Many commentaries in this group began their criticism of Gray from the premiss that nuclear deterrence could be defined only in terms of Mutual Assured Destruction. As a result, some critics failed to acknowledge that Gray offered his theory of victory as a rival theory of nuclear deterrence, or implied that Gray preferred war-fighting to deterrence.⁴ Others assumed that nuclear war-fighting strategies are incompatible with the requirements of stable deterrence.⁵ Although admitting the term theory of victory 'invited misunderstanding'⁶ and that, in retrospect, 'Victory is Possible' was a 'ghastly title',⁷ Gray should be defended against those commentators who failed to offer substantive criticism, choosing instead to ridicule and blatantly misrepresent his thesis. As Gray stated:

² Cited in R. Aldridge, *First Strike! The Pentagon's Strategy For Nuclear War*, Pluto Press, London, 1983, p.10.

³ Arthur Macy Cox, *Russian Roulette: The Superpower Game*, Times Books, New York, 1982, p.24.

⁴ G. Herken, *Counsels of War*, Knopf, New York, 1985, p.312. It was clearly demonstrated in Chapter 1 that for Gray, deterrence and defence are mutually reinforcing.

⁵ This type of misrepresentation pervades F. Barnaby, 'Will There be a Nuclear War', in F. Barnaby (ed.), *Future War: Armed Conflict in the Next Decade*, Michael Joseph, London, 1984, pp.26-43; and R. Aldridge, *The Counterforce Syndrome: A Guide to US Nuclear Weapons and Strategic Doctrine*, IPS, Washington, 1982.

⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Issues and Non-Issues in the Nuclear Policy Debate', *op.cit.*, p.48.

⁷ James Lardner, 'The Call of the Hawk's Hawke', *The Washington Post*, 14 May 1982, p.C1.

A strategic analyst who argues that 'victory or defeat' is possible may be held to have invited misrepresentation, but that fact no more excuses the misrepresentation than leaving a window unlocked exonerates the burglar.⁸

A more careful analysis of Gray's theory of victory gradually appeared in strategic studies literature. The critique has four components which together pose a creditable challenge to Gray's thesis. Gray's vision of a future war-winning nuclear strategy has been criticised on the basis that it was not, and would never be, feasible for domestic political reasons. There would be a lack of political support to fund the very expensive offensive and defensive systems needed to implement Gray's war-winning strategy⁹ and it is doubtful if the American public would support a high level of domestic mobilisation for nuclear war. Paul Stockton has noted that the high cost and obtrusive nature of civil defence 'have fostered a long standing aversion towards such measures within the U.S. electorate'.¹⁰ Many factors presently lend support to this argument. For example, in the current climate of improving Soviet-American political relations it is unlikely the U.S. body politic would endorse the damage limitation measures required for the operationalisation of Gray's theory of victory. In addition to ballistic missile defenses this would require both large and sustained investments in air and civil defence capabilities. There is considerable merit in Robert C. Gray's observation that:

The advocates of war winning overestimate what the domestic political traffic seems likely to bear in the way of preparing for nuclear war.¹¹

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- ⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Strategy: A Regrettable Necessity', *SAIS Review*, 3(1), Winter-Spring 1983, p.21.
 - ⁹ Phillip Bobbit, *Democracy and Deterrence: The History and Future of Nuclear Strategy*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1988, p.133-138; Phillip Bobbit, Lawrence Freedman and Gregory F. Treverton (eds), *U.S. Nuclear Strategy: A Reader*, Macmillan, London, 1989, pp.428-437.
 - ¹⁰ P. Stockton, *Strategic Stability Between the Superpowers*, Adelphi Paper No.213, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Winter 1986, p.56.
 - ¹¹ R.C. Gray, 'The Reagan Nuclear Strategy', in Robert Travis Scott (ed.), *The Race for Security*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1987, p.107.

Many critics adhered to the position that even if the political conditions favoured an attempt by the U.S. to adopt Gray's nuclear war-winning strategy as official strategic doctrine, enduring technological and operational difficulties would hinder all efforts to achieve strategic superiority over the Soviet Union. Firstly, defending American population centres against long range nuclear missile strikes is widely judged to be impossible. President Reagan's SDI generated acrimonious debate over the technological feasibility of strategic defenses. Although supporters and critics of SDI gathered evidence to legitimise their respective claims, a large body of literature demonstrates conclusively that President Reagan's vision of 'rendering nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete' is an illusion.¹²

Secondly, Gray's theory of victory requires targeting the Soviet State apparatus to enhance pre-war deterrence and, if necessary, to enforce the demise of the Soviet Union in war. Such a targeting priority would be confronted with major planning and operational dilemmas. Targeting the essential assets of the Soviet State and bringing a nuclear conflict to an end are incompatible strategic objectives.¹³ If key Soviet leadership centres are targeted and destroyed, with whom and with what does the United States negotiate an end to the conflict? If the United States executes a decapitating strike to sever the rigid claim of authority characteristic of a centrally controlled political system, how would it prevent massive and indiscriminate Soviet retaliatory strikes against the American homeland? Gray was willing to examine the problem of leadership targeting for war termination in his writings on the theory of

¹² For an early critical commentary on the proposed technologies of SDI see John Tirman (ed.), *The Fallacy of Star Wars*, Vintage Books, New York, 1984.

¹³ This thesis is explored at length in J. Richelson, 'The Dilemmas of Counterpower Targeting', *Comparative Strategy*, 2(3), 1980, pp.223-237, and Stephen J. Cimbala, 'Counter-command Attacks and War Termination' in Stephen J. Cimbala (ed.), *Strategic War Termination*, Praeger, New York 1986, pp.151-173. See also the useful discussion in I. Clark, *Limited Nuclear War: Political Theory and War Conventions*, Martin Robertson, Oxford, 1982, pp.176-201, and Scott D. Sagan, *Moving Targets: Nuclear Strategy and National Security*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, pp.87-88.

victory and displayed an acute understanding of the issues.¹⁴ He came to the conclusion that the U.S. should not strike at the Soviet political control structure in the initial stages of a nuclear war; instead this option should be reserved as an 'ultimate penalty' if all other attempts to force war termination upon the Soviet Union fail.¹⁵ Gray's alleged solution to the irreconcilable goals of counter-command targeting and war termination remains problematic because if the Soviet leadership is destroyed as the final strategic objective, how does the United States negotiate an end to the war on favourable terms?

Discussion on nuclear war termination should proceed cautiously and conclusions be offered tentatively. Apart from the works of Herman Kahn¹⁶ and Thomas Schelling¹⁷ in the 1960s, there had been few studies of nuclear war termination by the 1980s.¹⁸ Only in recent years have the theoretical and practical aspects of this issue been analysed in more detail.¹⁹ This includes studies that have examined whether the process by which conventional wars come to an end might be applicable to the future termination of nuclear war.²⁰ Although the findings are

¹⁴ Colin S. Gray and Keith B. Payne, 'Victory is Possible', *op.cit.*, pp.24-25; Colin S. Gray, 'Targeting Problems for Central War', *op.cit.*, pp.183-186.

¹⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Strategy and National Style', *op.cit.*, p.113.

¹⁶ H. Kahn, 'Issues of Thermonuclear War Termination' in *How Wars End* (Special Editor, William T.R. Fox), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.392, November 1970, pp.133-182.

¹⁷ T. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1966, pp.204-220.

¹⁸ See in particular F. Ikle, *Every War Must End*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1971.

¹⁹ In addition to the collection of articles in Stephen J. Cimbala (ed.), *Strategic War Termination*, see Clark C. Abt, *A Strategy For Terminating a Nuclear War*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1985; S. Albert and E.C. Luck (eds), *On the Endings of Wars*, National University Publications, New York, 1986; George H. Quester, 'War Termination and Nuclear Targeting' in D. Ball and J. Richelson (eds), *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, *op.cit.*, pp.285-305; P. Bracken, 'War Termination' in Ashton B. Carter, John D. Steinbruner and Charles A. Zracket (eds), *Managing Nuclear Operations*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC., 1987, pp.197-214; Robert G. Leahy, 'C³ for Strategic War Termination', *Signal*, 42(1), August 1988, pp.39-44; Stephen J. Cimbala and Joseph D. Douglas Jr. (eds), *Ending a Nuclear War: Are the Superpowers Prepared?* Pergamon Brassey's, Washington, 1988; and Stephen J. Cimbala, *Nuclear Endings: Stopping War on Time*, Praeger, New York, 1989.

²⁰ P. Keczkemeki, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1958; I. Clark, *Nuclear Past, Nuclear*

are incomplete the literature demonstrates that nuclear war termination is a neglected field of study requiring more attention; there would be major difficulties acquiring those weapon systems and C³I facilities necessary for terminating nuclear war; those works analysing conventional war endings are of limited value to the study of nuclear war termination; and nuclear war termination would cease to be an issue if a sizeable proportion of nuclear weapons exploded either on or over both the superpowers' homelands.

The Soviet Union has effectively compounded the dilemma of Gray's targeting preferences by massively investing in the hardening, dispersal and proliferation of leadership targets. According to Ball and Toth targeting the Soviet State is physically impossible:

The Soviet leadership crisis and war-time relocation network, is extremely extensive, complex, physically deep underground in most cases, and impenetrable to Western intelligence in significant aspects.²¹

There is also an assumption in Gray's argument that the U.S. would be able to neatly exclude the Soviet population from its nuclear targeting list. The reality would be different. According to David Hallenbach:

The proposal of Colin Gray is virtually indistinguishable from MAD. If actually carried out [it seems] certain to produce a form of spasmodic or indiscriminate response and counter-response that would be impossible to distinguish from the failure of MAD.²²

Present: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Contemporary Strategy, Westview Press, Boulder, 1985; and Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988.

²¹ Desmond Ball and Robert Toth, 'Revising the SIOP: Taking War-Fighting to Dangerous Extremes', *op.cit.*, p.88.

²² D. Hallenbach, 'Ethics in Distress: Can There Be Just War in the Nuclear Age?', in W.V. O'Brien and J. Langan (eds), *The Nuclear Dilemma and the Just War Tradition*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1986, p.25. See also McGeorge Bundy 'Strategic Deterrence Thirty Years Later: What Has Changed?', in *The Future of Strategic Deterrence, Part 1*, Adelphi Paper No.160, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, Autumn 1980, pp.5-12; George H. Quester, 'Ethnic Targeting: A Bad Idea Whose Time Has Come', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 5(2), June 1982, pp.228-235; L. Wieseltier, *Nuclear War, Nuclear Peace*, *op.cit.*, p.49.

Thirdly, Michael Howard has seriously questioned Gray's almost naive vision of a 'postwar world order compatible with Western values'. Assuming that the political and operational conditions of Gray's war-winning strategy exist sometime in the future, Howard justifiably makes the following claim:

The prospect of any regime in the least compatible with what Gray calls 'Western Values' emerging from a bloodbath ... is, to put it mildly, pretty remote.²³

During the mid 1980s, Gray was a harsh critic of strategic analysts who adhered to either Mutual Assured Destruction as the basis for stable deterrence or a variant of limited nuclear war-fighting, for their alleged inability to provide any 'policy relevant' advice to American officials responsible for executing foreign policy.²⁴ The criticisms presented above, however, amount to the claim that Gray's nuclear war-winning strategy is itself irrelevant to official debate over American strategic nuclear doctrine, at least for the 1990s, because the political, technological and operational conditions of the theory of victory are unattainable. Gray's strategic advocacy is, therefore, no more 'policy relevant' than Mutual Assured Destruction, notwithstanding his forceful argument to the contrary.

Gray's Response: A Nuclear De-emphasis?

How does Gray respond to these criticisms? What, if any thing, can be inferred from his writings? An overview of Gray's unfolding thesis on nuclear strategy from the mid 1970s reveals his fluctuating attitude towards the technological

²³ Michael E. Howard, 'On Fighting a Nuclear War', *International Security*, 5(4), Spring 1981, pp.3-17.

²⁴ For example, in 1984 Gray argued that 'Bernard Brodie, Michael Howard, Desmond Ball and many others say wise things, but they do not say anything very useful to the officials who must provide policy guidance', in *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, *op.cit.*, p.35. For Gray's first examination of the relationship between strategic theory and the requirements of policy makers see 'The Practice of Theory in International Relations', *Political Studies*, XXII, 1974, pp.129-146.

and political feasibility of the theory of victory, which can be roughly divided into three periods. From 1974 to 1982, Gray indicated that the technologies for damage limitation would not be available for at least several decades and that a nuclear war-winning strategy would be politically unacceptable in the United States. In 1976 Gray stated:

there is no way, in the short or medium term, in which the mutual hostage relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States can be upset. Neither the defensive nor the offensive technologies that may be currently projected over the next decade and beyond ... carry any significant promise of being able to reduce expected casualties to a negligible level.²⁵

Furthermore at the peak of advocating his theory of victory, Gray repeatedly expressed the following negative assessment:

A theory of victory, though valuable, is probably not practicable, given the improbability of the US body politic investing effectively in a capability for assured societal survival.²⁶

I am intensely skeptical over the willingness of the Reagan Administration to fund the defense programs that I favour.²⁷

I remain skeptical whether any American administration will choose to develop a defense posture genuinely balanced between the offense and the defense.²⁸

Despite these expressed reservations, Gray's objective during this period was to establish the theoretical validity of his war-winning strategy, renew a debate over ballistic missile defence similar to the ABM debate of the late 1960s²⁹ and lobby the U.S. defence community and government to invest in a damage limitation capability.

²⁵ Colin S. Gray, *The Soviet-American Arms Race*, Lexington Books, Lexington, 1976, p.147.

²⁶ Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and the MX*, Critical Issues, Heritage Foundation, Washington, 1980, p.51.

²⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'Chacun a son gout', *op.cit.*, p.65.

²⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'Forward' in Keith B. Payne, *Nuclear Deterrence in U.S. Soviet Relations*, *op.cit.*, XIV.

²⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'A New Debate on Ballistic Missile Defense', *Survival*, XXIII(2), March/April 1981, p.60-71.

Over the 1983-1985 period, Gray was confident that a consensus was emerging in the U.S. over the importance of nuclear war-fighting strategies for deterrence and that the U.S. defence community would see the wisdom of balancing offensive threats 'with a plausible multitiered theory of defense for the U.S. homeland'.³⁰ Gray went as far as to say that as the technology of strategic defence matures,

the United States should be prepared to effect an orderly transition to a strategic force posture that would be balanced between offensive and defensive capabilities.³¹

Gray's increasing optimism can be attributed to several factors including President Reagan's SDI and the Scowcroft Commission's endorsement of 'war-fighting deterrence'.³²

Within two years, however, a significant change in Gray's view concerning the feasibility of the theory of victory was apparent in his contributions to strategic studies literature. After 1986 there is a sudden shift in Gray's writings away from the theory of victory in nuclear war towards a U.S. strategy for victory in a global conventional war.³³ The focus of Gray's recent thesis is the use of America's superior maritime capabilities (in concert with a strengthened NATO) to threaten the Soviet Union with a global protracted conflict at the conventional level it could not win.³⁴

³⁰ Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and Strategic Planning*, *op.cit.*, p.122.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.126.

³² See in particular the Report's assertion that 'deterrence ... requires military effectiveness', *Report of the U.S. President's Commission on Strategic Forces*, 6 April 1983, reproduced in full in *Strategic Digest*, XIII(8), August 1983 pp.521-540.

³³ The first sign of this change is Colin S. Gray, *Maritime Strategy, Geopolitics and the Defense of the West*, National Strategy Information Centre, Inc., New York, 1986. Stephen Cimbala provides a useful summary of Gray's new thinking in *Rethinking Nuclear Strategy*, Scholarly Resources Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1988, p.107 and *Nuclear Endings: Stopping War on Time*, Praeger, New York, 1989, p.192.

³⁴ For the development and amplification of Gray's maritime strategy see, in addition to footnote 33, 'Maritime Strategy', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 112, February 1986, pp.34-43; 'Keeping the Soviets Landlocked: Geostrategy for a Maritime America', *The National Interest*, 4, Summer 1986, pp.24-36; 'Western Security and the Pacific: A Geopolitical Perspective', *NATO's Sixteen Nations*, 32, April 1987, pp.42-47; 'Maritime Strategy and the Pacific:

Although the details of Gray's maritime strategy are peripheral to this discussion, it is important to highlight that U.S. strategic forces would play a fundamentally different role from the one assigned to them in his theory of nuclear victory. Gray now argues that long range nuclear missiles must be relegated to the role of counter-deterrence because the U.S. can no longer threaten the first use of its nuclear weapons to support distant allies when the U.S. homeland is totally vulnerable to nuclear retaliation. As a counter-deterrent, U.S. strategic forces would allegedly deter the Soviet Union from escalating out of a global conventional conflict because to do so would invite nuclear retaliation against highly valued military and political assets in the Soviet Union.

As long as the United States lacks the ability to limit the level of damage that it might suffer at home as a consequence of nuclear operations that escalated out of a theater conflict, U.S. strategic forces must be relegated to the status of shield, and not sword, of the republic.³⁵

One of the primary objectives of Gray's maritime strategy is to prevent Soviet-American hostilities escalating to the use of nuclear weapons, especially homeland exchanges. This requires counter-deterrence to function perfectly for the duration of the conflict.³⁶

The Implications for NATO", *Naval War College Review*, 30, Winter 1987, pp.8-19; 'NATO: Time to Call it a Day?', *The National Interest*, Winter 1987/88, pp.13-26; 'The Maritime Strategy - 1988: Bad Strategy or Good Deterrent', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, February 1988, pp.54-61; *The Geopolitics of Superpower*, University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, 1988; 'Ocean and Continent in Strategy', *Comparative Strategy*, 7(4), 1988, pp.439-444; 'The Maritime Strategy in U.S.-Soviet Relations', *Naval War College Review*, XLII(1), Winter 1989, pp.7-18; 'The Maritime Strategy is Not New', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 116(1), January 1990, pp.66-72; Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (eds), *Seapower and Strategy*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1989; and 'U.S. Naval Power and Competitive Grand Strategy', *International Defense Review*, 23(3), 1990, pp.255-258.

³⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic Priorities and U.S. Options: Escalation and Extended War', in Stephen J. Cimbala (ed.), *The Soviet Challenge in the 1990s*, Praeger, New York, 1989, p.131.

³⁶ As Gray recently stated 'a country that is winning a conventional war can have no motive to employ nuclear weapons, while a country that is losing will recognize that nuclear use would make a bad situation very much worse', in 'Seapower and Landpower', Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (eds), *Seapower and Strategy*, *op.cit.*, p.23.

While space precludes an extended commentary on Gray's maritime strategy, two weaknesses must be identified. Firstly, Gray fails to address the fundamental differences between his preferred maritime strategy and America's present maritime strategy enunciated by Admiral James D. Watkins in January 1986.³⁷ America's forward offensive maritime strategy generated controversy over its aim to destroy with conventional weapons, Soviet nuclear powered ballistic missile carrying submarines (SSBNs) in their home waters in the initial stages of a conflict.³⁸ Critics were adamant that an attempt to destroy the Soviet Union's sea based nuclear deterrent would carry the real risk of inadvertent nuclear war at sea,³⁹ with possible escalation to all out nuclear war.⁴⁰ Secondly, the internal logic of Gray's maritime strategy can be questioned. He asserts that the Soviet Union would not escalate to the nuclear level because of America's nuclear counter-deterrent. The success of counter-deterrence, however, has been overstated. The Soviet Union might be forced into the position of seeking a more favourable war outcome by resorting to nuclear weapons.⁴¹ If Gray's maritime strategy was implemented there would be a definite possibility of hostilities crossing the nuclear threshold. Gray is vulnerable, therefore, to the types of criticisms he levelled at supporters of strategic stability through MAD

³⁷ James D. Watkins, P.X. Kelly and John F. Lehman, Jr. 'The Maritime Strategy', supplement to *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 112, January 1986.

³⁸ There is a vast literature on U.S. Maritime Strategy. For a good representation of the lively debate see John J. Mearsheimer, 'A Strategic Misstep: The Maritime Strategy and Deterrence in Europe', *International Security*, 11(2), Fall 1986, pp.3-57; and Linton F. Brooks, 'Naval Power and National Security: The Case For the Maritime Strategy', *International Security*, 11(2), Fall 1986, pp.58-88.

³⁹ For an excellent discussion of the risk of nuclear war at sea see Desmond Ball, 'Nuclear War at Sea', *International Security*, 10(3), Winter 1985/86, pp.3-31.

⁴⁰ This thesis is developed in Barry R. Posen, 'U.S. Maritime Strategy: A Dangerous Game', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 43(7), September 1987, pp.24-28; and D. Hodgkinson, *Inadvertent Nuclear War: The U.S. Maritime Strategy and the Cult of Offensive*, Working Paper No.159, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, July 1988.

⁴¹ The possibility of Soviet escalation to the use of either tactical or strategic nuclear weapons at sea cannot be discounted. See Gordon H. McCormick and Mark E. Miller, 'American Seapower at Risk: Nuclear Weapons in Soviet Naval Planning', *Orbis*, 25(2), Summer 1981, pp.351-367; and Donald F. Daniel, 'The Soviet Navy and Tactical Nuclear War at Sea', *Survival*, XXIX(4), July/August 1987, pp.318-335.

because the United States would be risking nuclear war without being able to either control the escalation process or limit the amount of destruction the Soviet Union could visit upon the American homeland.

Is it possible to determine what influenced the shift in Gray's theoretical writings on strategy after 1986? A careful reading of Gray indicates that the main factor forcing him away from a continued emphasis on victory in nuclear war was a falling optimism concerning the likelihood of the U.S. embracing a damage limitation package consisting of strategic, air and civil defences. In 1986, in sharp contrast to the tone of his writings between 1983-1985, Gray stated that:

... it would be prudent for American planners and commentators in the 1980s to recognize the plain aversion in Western political culture to ... a bid for the restoration of superiority, as well as the improbability of its technical accomplishment under current, peacetime circumstances.⁴²

This falling optimism represented the culmination of Gray's critique of U.S. strategic culture and the alleged impact of that culture on America's approach to problems of national security.⁴³

Immediate questions arise: does Gray's maritime strategy supplant his theory of victory in nuclear war? Does it indicate that Gray now believes his theory of victory in nuclear war to be obsolete? Readers of Gray in 1986 may have been uncertain as to his real stance on the theory of victory because at the same time the above passage was written (indicating Gray's losing faith in the likelihood of strategic defences becoming politically in vogue or technologically feasible), Gray's seven

⁴² Colin S. Gray, *Maritime Strategy, Geopolitics, and the Defense of the West*, *op.cit.*, p.68.

⁴³ For the development of Gray's thesis on American strategic culture see his 'Force Planning, Political Guidance and the Decision to Fight', *Military Review*, LVIII(4), April 1978, pp.12-14; 'National Style in Strategy: The American Example', *International Security*, 6(2), Fall 1981, pp.21-47; 'Comparative Strategic Culture', *Parameters*, X14(4), Winter 1984, pp.26-33; *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, *op.cit.*, Chapter 2; and 'National Signatures in Defense', *Defense Science and Electronics*, 7(1), January 1988, pp.24-26.

year advocacy of the theory of victory reached its apogee with the appearance of *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* in 1986.

The strongest single policy argument in this book is that U.S. strategic nuclear planning should be as attentive to the protection of the U.S. homeland as it is to the potential destruction of Soviet assets.⁴⁴

It can be clearly demonstrated that Gray's focus on maritime strategy after 1986 does not alter in any way his present belief in both the strategic need for the U.S. to adopt a theory of victory in nuclear war and the technological feasibility of damage limitation. This claim is supported by the following evidence:

- a. Gray's continuing endorsement of strategic defenses after 1986⁴⁵ together with his strong support for Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapons and the need for the U.S. to develop a 'space warfare' doctrine;⁴⁶
- b. his recent appeal to the U.S. defence community to develop an operational strategic nuclear doctrine relating means to ends;⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, op.cit., IX.

⁴⁵ See Gray's 'The Transition From Offense to Defense', *The Washington Quarterly*, 9(3), Summer 1986, pp.59-72; 'Deterrence and Strategic Defense: A Positive View', in Craig Snyder (ed.), *The Strategic Defense Debate: Can 'Star Wars' Make Us Safe?* The University of Pennsylvania Press, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1986, pp.169-182; 'Denting the Shield, Blunting the Sword: The Soviet War Against the S.D.I.', *Defense Science* 2003+4, No.6, December 1985-January 1986, pp.11-19; and 'The Simplistic Thinking on SDI is no Debate at all', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 September 1988, Part II, p.5.

⁴⁶ For the development of Gray's thesis on space warfare and doctrine see his *American Military Space Policy: Information Systems, Weapon Systems and Arms Control*, Abt Books, Cambridge, Mass. 1982; 'The Military Uses of Space', *Survival* XXV(5) September/October 1983, pp.194-204; 'The Strategic Nuclear Policy of the Reagan Administration: Trends, Problems and the Potential Relevance of Space Based Laser Weapons', in Keith B. Payne (ed.), *Laser Weapons in Space: Policy and Doctrine*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1983, pp.189-218; 'U.S. Military Space Policy' in Adam M. Garfinkle (ed.) *Global Perspectives on Arms Control*, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1984, pp.133-144; 'Why an ASAT Treaty is a Bad Idea', *Aerospace America*, 22(4), April 1984, pp.70-74; 'Space Arms Control: A Skeptical View', *Air University Review*, 37(1), November/December 1985, pp.50-55; 'Space Warfare - Part I, The Need for Doctrine', *National Defense*, LXXII(434), January 1988, pp.25-28; 'Space Warfare - Part II, Principles, Weapons and Tactics', *National Defense*, LXXII(435), February 1988, pp.39-43; and 'ASAT For Space Control - Wanted, Yet Missing', *Defense Science*, 7(6), June 1988, pp.38-41.

⁴⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'U.S. Strategic Culture: Implications For Defense Technology', in Asa A. Clark and John F. Lilley (eds), *Defense Technology*, Praeger, New

- c. his belief that the present condition of mutual vulnerability is only a passing phase in the long term strategic relationship between the superpowers;⁴⁸
- d. his recent claim that the concept of victory in nuclear war 'remains very important for domestic politics, for purposive defense planning, and for deterrence;⁴⁹ and
- e. the absence of any published material by Gray indicating a revision of the strategic arguments underpinning the theory of victory.

In June 1988 Gray stated, in relation to his theory of victory, that 'my strategic reasoning *qua* strategic reasoning, has not altered'.⁵⁰ It can be safely argued that Gray's present position on the theory of victory in nuclear war, as a theory of nuclear deterrence, is the one presented in his *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (1986).

The Theory of Victory and Strategic Stability

Nuclear war-fighting strategies, including Gray's theory of victory, have been criticised on the basis that they erode the stability of nuclear deterrence in either one of two ways. The inclusion of discriminate and selective nuclear options in the SIOP for controlled nuclear war together with accurate counterforce ICBMs, could make nuclear war more thinkable and, therefore, more likely. In a military confrontation with the Soviet Union, resorting to nuclear weapons might appear an attractive option to U.S. Policy makers.⁵¹ A more convincing argument is that a U.S. capability to limit damage at home through a combination of offensive strikes at Soviet long range

York, 1989, pp.31-48; 'Nuclear Strategy: What is True, What is False, What is Arguable', *Comparative Strategy*, 9(1), 1990, pp.7-32.

⁴⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Deterrence and Technological Change: Retrospect and Prospect' in R. Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror*, Allen and Unwin, London 1987, pp.....

⁴⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic De-escalation', in Stephen J. Cimbala and Joseph D. Douglass Jr. (eds), *Ending a Nuclear War: Are the Superpowers Prepared?* Pergamon-Brassey's, Washington, 1988, footnote 18, page 76.

⁵⁰ Cited from private correspondence between author and Colin Gray dated June 28 1988.

⁵¹ Louis Rene Beres, 'Nuclear Strategy and World Order: The United States Imperative', *Alternatives*, 8(2), Fall 1982, p.158.

nuclear missiles and the deployment of active and passive defences would lead to what Thomas Schelling described as the 'Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack'.⁵² During an intense crisis, the Soviet Union would have a strong incentive to pre-empt so as to destroy as many U.S. ICBMs in their silos and maximise the penetration of U.S. defensive technologies. This could significantly limit the amount of damage to Soviet society and facilitate post war recovery. Similarly, with the knowledge that a Soviet pre-emptive strike would be advantageous, the U.S. incentive to pre-empt would be strengthened because of the advantages to be gained by striking first.

The 'crisis instability' charge has been further developed. Robert Glasser argues that even if it could be demonstrated that the Soviet Union might refrain from pre-empting on the basis that America's land based ICBM force was both invulnerable and capable of retaliating against highly valued Soviet targets, Soviet pre-emption might still be considered.

For the USSR, a post-war world in which neither nation survived might be preferable to one in which only the United States survived.⁵³

Glasser is saying that psychological and cognitive pressures during an intense crisis would possibly be more of an influence on a decision to pre-empt than a rational assessment of net gains and losses.⁵⁴ According to Donald Hanson and Ken Booth, war-winning strategies increase the risk of nuclear war in other ways. They argue that by advertising a strategy of prevailing in nuclear war and a willingness to acquire the requisite offensive and defensive systems, the U.S. would greatly increase the level of Soviet anxiety. Whereas Gray contended that increasing the level of Soviet anxiety would strengthen deterrence, Hanson and Booth believe this would either induce

⁵² T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, chapter 9.

⁵³ R. Glasser, *Nuclear Pre-emption and Crisis Stability, 1985-1990*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No.37, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986, p.19.

⁵⁴ R. Glasser, *Pre-emption in the Nuclear Age*, PhD Dissertation, The Australian National University, 1988, especially Part IV 'Nuclear Pre-emption: Prognoses and Responses', pp.320-358.

recklessness in Soviet behaviour or, more than likely, cause a sharp downturn in Soviet-American political relations.⁵⁵

An additional instability charge levelled at Gray's theory of victory is that it would lead to a spiralling arms race by provoking the Soviet Union to offset America's drive for strategic superiority. This would exacerbate the already strained political relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, and lead to the development of offensive and defensive weapon systems capable of destroying each other's retaliatory or second strike force of ICBMs. According to Andrew Mack, theories of victory 'create powerful incentives for building more, rather than fewer nuclear weapons'.⁵⁶ In summary, Gray's theory of victory has been criticised on the basis that, if translated into official American strategic nuclear doctrine, it would generate both 'crisis' and 'arms race' instabilities.

For nearly fifteen years, Gray has fiercely contested the instability charges against war-fighting and war-winning nuclear strategies. He believes the crisis instability argument is based on a misguided theory of strategic stability.⁵⁷ Gray is adamant that a U.S. theory of victory in nuclear war would not increase the risk of Soviet nuclear pre-emption for one important reason. The Soviet Union would not initiate a strategic nuclear campaign if it could be denied its war time objectives or brought to the brink of political defeat via an intelligent American war plan that threatened the control apparatus of the Soviet State and its military forces. Gray's response to the arms race instability charge is that with the mix of offensive and defensive systems required for the theory of victory to become operationally feasible, the Soviet Union would eventually seek to bargain away its ICBMs in return for

⁵⁵ D. Hanson, 'Is Soviet Strategic Doctrine Superior?', *International Security*, 7(3), 1982/83, pp.61-83; K. Booth, 'Nuclear Deterrence and "World War III": How Will History Judge?', in Roman Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror*, Allen and Unwin, Boston, 1987, pp.251-281.

⁵⁶ A. Mack, 'Conclusions: The Future of Arms Control' in D. Ball and A. Mack (eds), *The Future of Arms Control*, *op.cit.*, p.310.

⁵⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic Stability Reconsidered', *Daedalus*, 109(4), Fall 1980, pp.125-154.

major concessions from the U.S. This is because the Soviet Union's long range nuclear weapons would no longer be able to fulfil their primary war time missions.

Gray's argument is far from convincing. He provides no evidence to demonstrate that the Soviet Union would respond in the way he suggests, and overstates the influence (if any) of American strategic nuclear force developments on the processes which have led the Soviet Union to modernise its ICBM force over the past 20 years. Just as Gray was critical during the 1970s of the 'Action-Reaction' explanation for arms race behaviour between states,⁵⁸ there is no reason to believe that the Soviet Union would react to an American drive for offensive strategic superiority by bargaining away its own ICBMs. By using Gray's logic, the Soviet Union would more than likely try to subvert U.S. strategy by acquiring more offensive weapons.⁵⁹

Gray's conception of how to retain a semblance of stability in Soviet-American strategic relations - by the U.S. possessing the means to defeat the Soviet Union in war - is more problematic. Being attentive to the structure of Gray's argumentation exposes, in the words of Donald Hanson, 'a perplexing blend of internal strain, ambiguity and question-begging on a very large scale'.⁶⁰ A careful reading of Gray reveals inconsistencies in the development of his thesis. Over the course of a decade, Gray embraced conflicting notions of strategic stability to accommodate the changing fortunes of weapons systems which would be an integral part of his war-winning strategy. Gray's ardent support of the MX ICBM will now be used as an example.

⁵⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'Action and Reaction in the Nuclear Arms Race', *op.cit.*, pp.16-26; 'The Arms Race Phenomenon', *World Politics*, XXIV(1), October 1971, pp.39-79; 'The Urge to Compete: Rationales for Arms Racing', *World Politics*, XXVI(1), October 1973, pp.207-233; 'How Does the Nuclear Arms Race Work?', *Cooperation and Conflict*, IX, 1974, pp.285-295. Gray's critique of 'Action-Reaction' culminated with *The Soviet-American Arms Race*, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ John Bayliss, 'Alliance Reform' in Ken Booth and John Bayliss, *Britain, NATO and Nuclear Weapons: Alternative Defence Versus Alliance Reform*, Macmillan, London, 1989, p.339.

⁶⁰ D. Hanson, 'Is Soviet Strategic Doctrine Superior?', *op.cit.*, p.72.

During the mid 1970s, the increasing theoretical vulnerability of U.S. Minuteman missiles to a Soviet pre-emptive nuclear strike became the most controversial strategic issue within the United States.⁶¹ There was widespread concern that a 'window of vulnerability' would open in the mid 1980s to be exploited both militarily and politically by the Soviet Union.⁶² The window of vulnerability thesis was the driving force behind the case for a follow-on ICBM such as MX. Gray advanced the most sophisticated rationale for MX.⁶³ Between 1971 and 1982, however, Gray's support for the MX ICBM was contingent on the system being deployed in one of the many mobile (and hence survivable) basing options reviewed by the U.S. during this period⁶⁴ and used only as a second strike counterforce weapon after the first nuclear exchange. He was convinced that a non-survivable MX, each carrying ten highly accurate MIRVed warheads, would be a lucrative target increasing the risk of Soviet nuclear pre-emption during a crisis. As early as 1971, Gray stated:

This author shares the general Western belief that pre-emptive capabilities are de-stabilizing. Their acquisition can easily be mistaken for a bid for superiority and their maintenance would require a 'hair trigger' reaction that both increases the risk of accidental and miscalculated launch and could serve to lower the threshold beyond which lies general nuclear war.⁶⁵

By 1975 Gray held the view that:

... the follow-on ICBM concept, the MX, will have to be deployed largely in a mobile mode ... by the mid 1980s it will hardly seem

⁶¹ Donald Snow claimed that the theoretical vulnerability of Minuteman Missiles 'is one of the most raging controversies in the contemporary defense debate', *The Nuclear Future: Towards a Strategy of Uncertainty*, The University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 1983, p.35.

⁶² P. Nitze, 'Deterring Our Deterrent', *Foreign Policy*, No.25, Winter 1976-77, pp.195-210.

⁶³ See 'The Strategic Forces Triad: End of the Road?' *op.cit.*, pp.775-776.

⁶⁴ Close to 30 ICBM basing schemes were examined over the period spanning the 1960s and 1970s. Gray ultimately favoured the multiple Protective Structure (MPS) concept for MX basing. See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, Hearings, *MX ICBM: Multiple Protective Structure (MPS) Basing and Arms Control*, 95th Congress, 1st Session, 18 April 1979, pp.269-384.

⁶⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'Security Through SALT?', *op.cit.*, p.10.

sensible to deploy the next generation of missiles in a basing mode that is already very vulnerable.⁶⁶

In 1978 Gray told his readers that:

Critics of a major American hard-target counter-force capability such as the MX ICBM have an excellent case to argue if that capability were to remain vulnerable to Soviet strategic strikes.⁶⁷

In other words, MX deployed in fixed silos 'appears to be precluded by common sense. An MX in a silo is as vulnerable as a Minuteman III in a silo'.⁶⁸ The following year, Gray was more forthright in stating that MX would not receive his endorsement if deployed in a vulnerable basing mode, such as fixed ICBM silos.⁶⁹

In terms of crisis stability, the United States is better off with Minuteman III in silos than it would be with MXs in silos. The Soviet incentive to strike at silo housed MX should be greater than the incentive to strike at Minuteman.⁷⁰

Again, in 1982 Gray explained that it was not difficult to understand why the Senate Armed Services Committee denied the Department of Defence the option of deploying MX in fixed silos:

Vulnerable high value military assets, in a time of extreme tension, probably would function more as a lightning rod or incentive for attack, than as a deterrent.⁷¹

Gray was also scathing of the suggestion that the U.S. could adopt a Launch on Warning (LOW) policy if its ICBM force was housed in vulnerable silos.⁷² This

⁶⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'SALT II and the Strategic Balance', *British Journal of International Studies*, October 1975, p.206.

⁶⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'The MX Debate', *op.cit.*, p.107.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.111.

⁶⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'The MX ICBM: Why We Need It', *Air Force Magazine*, 62(8), August 1979, pp.66-71.

⁷⁰ Colin S. Gray, 'Soviet Strategic Systems: Implications For the U.S. Deterrent Posture', in L. Goure, William G. Hyland and Colin S. Gray, *The Emerging Strategic Environment: Implications For Ballistic Missile Defense*, Institute For Foreign Policy Analysis Inc., Cambridge, Mass. 1979, p.66.

⁷¹ Colin S. Gray, 'Why Does the United States Need ICBMs?', *NATO's Fifteen Nations*, 27, August/September 1982, p.82.

⁷² Gray believed that for the United States to launch its ICBMs on positive warning and assessment of a Soviet nuclear attack 'would represent an all-

policy would enable the U.S. to release its ICBMs on confirmation of a Soviet missile attack.

A turning point in the debate over Minuteman vulnerability arrived when President Reagan's Commission on Strategic Forces (the Scowcroft Commission) recommended in its 1983 report that 100 MX missiles be deployed in existing (vulnerable) Minuteman III silos. This recommendation was made on the basis that deterrence stability would not be weakened because the two remaining legs of the strategic triad - SLBMs and manned bombers - were independently survivable. After 1983, Gray welcomed the Scowcroft Commission's endorsement of MX and strongly supported immediate deployment of MX in Minuteman silos.⁷³ In doing so, however, Gray offered strategic arguments which flatly contradicted his explicitly stated view before 1983. Gray rebuked all suggestions that MX deployed in fixed silos would generate Soviet and American fears of pre-emption; he was adamant that silo housing of MX would not lead to a 'Reciprocal Fear of Surprise Attack'. Ironically, one of the main arguments used by Gray to defend his position was that the United States could adopt a Launch on Warning policy - the very policy he ridiculed in the late 1970s.⁷⁴ By 1987, Gray was arguing that the deployment of MX in vulnerable silos would provide the U.S. with a secure second strike counterforce capability to strengthen deterrence, whereas before 1983 he strongly argued that silo housing of MX would increase the risk of nuclear war via fears of pre-emption. The two positions are clearly incompatible.

time nadir in strategic thought and planning (against what do we launch?)', in 'The Strategic Forces Triad: End of the Road?', *op.cit.*, pp.780-781.

⁷³ Colin S. Gray, 'Abiding Realities and Strategic Needs', *Air Force Magazine*, 66(7), July 1983, pp.73-76; Colin S. Gray, Keith B. Payne, and Barry R. Schneider (eds), *Missiles For the Nineties: ICBMs and Strategic Policy*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1984; and Colin S. Gray, *Missiles Against War: The ICBM Debate Today*, Issues in National Security, National Institute for Public Policy, Fairfax Virginia, 1985.

⁷⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'ICBMs and Deterrence: The Controversy Over Prompt Launch', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 10(3), September 1987, pp.285-309.

This example has demonstrated how Gray manipulated strategic arguments to maintain his support for the MX ICBM in light of the Scowcroft Commission Report's recommendations concerning MX deployment. Gray's continuing support for MX, therefore, has not been based on a consistent or clearly defined view of deterrence and strategic stability but rather on his obsession with the counterforce prowess of MX, especially its ability to promptly destroy Soviet leadership targets and Soviet long range nuclear weapons.

CHAPTER THREE

ASSESSING THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE THEORY OF VICTORY

In Chapter One it was demonstrated that Gray presents his theory of victory in nuclear war foremost as a theory of nuclear deterrence superior to stable deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction, and as the only operational strategy nuclear doctrine from which the United States could hope to achieve some version of 'victory' or favourable war termination in a nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it was argued that Gray attempts to justify his theory of victory by appealing to a chain of strategic logic which allegedly underpins that theory. The strategic logic used by Gray between 1979 and 1986 to explicate the theory of victory, conceals an edifice of assumptions and political beliefs that are more controversial than Gray would otherwise have his readers believe. The aim of this chapter is to identify the rigid structure or framework of assumptions supporting Gray's strategic advocacy and to offer a broad critique of those assumptions so as to arrive at a more complete understanding of his theory. The starting premiss of this chapter has been clearly stated by John Garnett.

The assumptions which underpin a good deal of contemporary strategic thought are rarely articulated, and may not even be appreciated by those who actually engage in strategic analysis... Nevertheless, just as an argument is only as strong as the premises upon which it is founded, so a body of strategic analysis is only as sound as the assumptions on which it is based.¹

Colin Gray's World View: Realpolitik and Soviet Style in Strategy

An exclusive focus on the two 'theory of victory' articles (1979 and 1980) provides at best an incomplete understanding of the assumptions of the theory of victory. Over two decades, Gray has written on so many overlapping themes that the

¹ John Garnett, 'Strategic Studies and its Assumptions', in J. Baylis, K. Booth, J. Garnett and P. Williams (eds), *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies*, Croom Helm, London, 1975, p.9.

assumptions are developed gradually and in a disjointed form. While Gray does not deliberately conceal from readers the assumptions of his thesis, they can be difficult to detect by virtue of his style of writing and method of scholarship. As Lawrence Freedman stated:

It is part of Gray's style to generate a barrage of assertions and generalizations, often without giving the reader a chance to assess properly their meaning, validity or implications... Instead of being guided through an argument, sometimes one feels one is being set up for an ambush.²

A perusal of Gray's strategic/theoretical writings from the early 1970s reveals a fixed hierarchy of assumptions that could be described as a 'world view', a view that determines the course of his strategic advocacy to the present day.

Firstly, at some risk of over-simplification, Gray adheres to what may be termed a crude Realist view of international relations especially concerning the central actors or players in the international arena; the major issues to be considered for analysis; and the underlying causes of war and peace. In this discussion, the term Realism refers specifically to Gray's belief that the international system of sovereign states is permanently anarchical; that states are the central and most important actors on the world stage; that a state's quest for power is the defining characteristic of international relations; and that, through countervailing military power and alliance formations, states seek to preserve a balance of power as the basis for international stability.³ Consequently, international relations is characterised by great power rivalry and conquest, clearly traceable to the Peloponnesian War.⁴ For a detailed representation of Gray's view of international relations one need look no further than

² Lawrence Freedman, 'The Strategists Vocation', *op.cit.*, p.171.

³ These views are clearly expressed by Gray in 'Foreign Policy - There is No Choice', *Foreign Policy*, 24, Fall 1976, pp.115-127; *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands, and the Technological Revolution*, *op.cit.*

⁴ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Penguin, London, 1954.

the works of E.H. Carr, Nicholas Spykman and Hans Morgenthau,⁵ works frequently acknowledged and praised by Gray in his writings.

Gray's clear allegiance to the major tenets of Classical Realism - Power Politics and the Balance of Power - has influenced the way he characterises international relations in the nuclear age. For example, Gray discounts the thesis that the advent of atomic and subsequently thermonuclear weapons has fundamentally altered the practice of statecraft or revolutionised traditional military strategy. In the absence of any structural changes to both the anarchic international system and the political rivalry dividing East and West, Gray argues that international relations and statecraft will be conducted in the same way as had been the practice long prior to the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Gray believes that nuclear weapons have been grafted on to the traditional ways states conduct their affairs.

... statecraft with nuclear weapons looks very much like statecraft without nuclear weapons... 'The rules of the road' in international politics are more restrictive than previously was the case, but the same activities are pursued; the basic competitive character of international politics has accommodated nuclear energy.⁶

The second tier of Gray's 'world view' consists of a clearly defined thesis on the dynamics of Soviet-American strategic and political rivalry within the boundaries of the international system described above. Gray argues that the Soviet Union and the United States are locked into a permanent ideological adversary relationship that can only change its present course following a revolution in international politics originating from a transformation of either the present Soviet or American social and

⁵ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Macmillan, London, 1939; Nicholas Spykman, *America's Strategy in the world: The United States and the Balance of Power*, Archon, Hamden, Conn., 1970 (first published in 1942); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*, New York, Knopf, 1948.

⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Across the Nuclear Divide - Strategic Studies, Past and Present', *International Security*, 2(1), Summer 1977, p.32. This argument is also forcefully presented in Colin S. Gray, 'The "Racing Syndrome" and the Strategic Balance', in L.L. Whetten, *The Future of Soviet Military Power*, Macdonalds and Jane, London, 1976, pp.29-30.

social and political systems. Gray maintains that the struggle is not based only on ideological differences. The two major powers are rivals 'by virtue of their joint preeminence in international politics'. Political competition, therefore, 'would characterise Soviet-American relations' in spite of their respective political systems.⁷

What is the basis for Gray's claim of a permanent East-West political struggle? It is argued that the Soviet Union is ideologically committed to an unremitting political struggle with an antagonistic social system.⁸ Furthermore, the Soviet Union's major external security condition is the existence of the United States 'as an independent security-organising power in world politics'.⁹ Gray repeated this argument when he stated:

Aside from ideological considerations, the United States is the Soviet Union's mortal foe because of its very existence as the preeminent centre of countervailing power, which the Soviet Union does not control.¹⁰

Just as the U.S. is the main Soviet adversary because of its very existence as an opposing superpower, Gray similarly claims that 'it is the very character of the Soviet State that is the proximate U.S. security problem'.¹¹ Consequently the United States must view the Soviet Union as a permanent and hostile adversary and maximise every opportunity to contain and, if necessary, physically constrain through the employment of force, Soviet power and influence. Gray is essentially arguing that because the Soviet Union has no choice but to wage an inalienable political struggle against the West, especially reducing American influence in Europe and its periphery, the United States likewise has no choice but to fulfil the duty of containing and balancing Soviet

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁸ See Colin S. Gray, 'The End of SALT? Purpose and Strategy in U.S.-U.S.S.R. Negotiations', *op.cit.*, p.41, and 'Who's Afraid of the Cruise Missile?', *Orbis*, 21(3), Fall 1977, p.524.

⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'International Order and American Power', *Air University Review*, XXXV(6), September/October 1984, p.28.

¹⁰ Colin S. Gray, 'Planning For U.S. Security Interests', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 110(12), December 1984, p.42.

¹¹ Colin S. Gray, '"Dear Voter": An Open Letter to the American Electorate', *Air Force Magazine*, 63(10), October 1980, p.54.

power. Soviet-American political and hence military competition is for Gray a normal and unalterable state of affairs reflecting the true nature of international relations.

A more complete picture of Gray's 'world view' begins to emerge from what is perhaps the most controversial assumption of his theory of victory; that the Soviet Union is best described as an insecure empire driven by an expansionist ideology to attain the ultimate goal of global hegemony.¹² During the 1970s, Gray became increasingly critical of U.S. civilian strategists for debating the technical criteria for strategic stability, supposedly resulting in the formation of policies based on a fictitious adversary and that mirror-imaged the salient weaknesses of American strategic culture. According to Gray, the path to the formulation of a sensible national security policy and accompanying military strategy lies with a

careful ... assessment of the stable elements of an identifiable Soviet political-strategic culture and style of behaviour in international affairs.¹³

The beginnings of what may be termed Gray's 'Soviet threat thesis' is evident in his mid-1970s assertion that the Soviet Union rejected the Western concept of strategic stability and was embarking on a massive military build-up signalling a bid for strategic superiority over the United States. When Gray was preoccupied with advocating the theory of victory between 1979 and 1982, his interpretation of Soviet strategic culture matured into an articulate thesis consisting of two important arguments.

Firstly, a careful reading of Russian history and culture provides unmistakable evidence that the Soviet Union's 'firm, indeed unalterable, commitment to the long term struggle for global hegemony' is attributable to a 'malign combination of

¹² This thesis is explored at length in Colin S. Gray 'Reflections on Empire: The Soviet Connection', *Military Review*, 62(1), January 1982, pp.2-13, and Colin S. Gray and Rebecca V. Strobe, 'The Imperial Dimensions of Soviet Military Power', *Problems of Communism*, XXX(6), November-December 1981, pp.1-15.

¹³ Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, *op.cit.*, p.42.

Russian imperialism and Soviet ideology'.¹⁴ Gray describes the Soviet Union as an insecure empire. Such a label has three related components:

- a. as an imperial power the Soviet Union defines its own security in terms of the insecurity of all other powers;
- b. there is no limit to Soviet global ambitions. It is impossible to erect a boundary defining the extremities of Soviet foreign policy ambitions. According to Gray 'The Soviet Union has to seek to expand her area of control precisely because nothing she holds is, or can be, secure enough';¹⁵ and
- c. there is no Soviet conception of a stable international political order. As a true revolutionary power, the Soviet Union views international politics as an arena for relentless competition with opposing centres of power.

Gray's thesis on the Soviet Union is neatly captured in his 1984 proclamation that:

The Soviet Union is both a rising power seeking its place in the sun with no identifiable limits to its ambitions, and it is an insecure empire possibly tempted to strengthen its extant grip on marcher territories by extending the frontiers of its hegemonic imperium. These feature and considerations are overlaid with a stale ideology that has universalistic, messianic pretensions.¹⁶

Secondly, the 1980s would be a dangerous decade for the West not because one could discern an emerging 'window of opportunity' to be exploited by ruthless Soviet leaders in possession of superior military power, but because structural weaknesses in the Soviet empire might provide an incentive for external adventure embroiling the West in a military confrontation.

¹⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'Arms Control in Soviet Policy', *Air Force Magazine*, 63(3), March 1980, p.66.

¹⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'The Most Dangerous Decade: Historic Mission, Legitimacy, and Dynamics of the Soviet Empire in the 1980s', *Orbis*, 25(1), Spring 1981, p.15. This argument is also conveyed in Colin S. Gray, 'Understanding Soviet Military Power', *Problems of Communism*, XXX(2), March/April 1981, pp.64-67.

¹⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'War-Fighting For Deterrence', *op.cit.*, p.7.

... a malign combination of relative military strength and perceived domestic weakness could make the Soviet Union a particularly dangerous player in the international politics of the 1980s.¹⁷

Perceived weaknesses could originate from within the Soviet domestic economy or the highly centralised political system, or from a drive by the Soviet Republics for political succession resulting in an imperial crisis.

Gray attempts to unify the assumptions - Realpolitik, a permanent Soviet-American political rivalry and the Soviet Union as an insecure empire - with an analysis of international politics based on the principles of Classical Geopolitics.¹⁸ He claims that East-West relations can only be properly understood if explained in geopolitical terms, with geopolitics referring to 'the relation of international political power to the geographical setting'.¹⁹ Gray is a disciple of the Mackinder-Spykman view that the world

... reduced to its power related essentials, consists of a Heartland superpower that is locked in a permanent struggle with the offshore, insular continental superpower, the United States, for effective control of the Rimlands and marginal sea of the World-Island... The Soviet objective is power - and then more power.²⁰

While Classical Geopolitics has received little attention in the fields of international relations and strategic studies since 1945,²¹ geopolitical analysis permeates all of Gray's writings to the present day.²²

¹⁷ Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic Forces, General Purpose Forces, and Crisis Management', *op.cit.*, p.68. See also 'The Most Dangerous Decade: Historic Mission, Legitimacy, and Dynamics of the Soviet Empire in the 1980s', *op.cit.*, pp.13-28.

¹⁸ 'Classical Geopolitics' refers to Sir Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality*, Norton, New York, 1962 (first published in 1919), and Nicholas Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1944.

¹⁹ Gray borrowed this definition from Saul B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a Divided World*, Methuen, London, 1964.

²⁰ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era*, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

²¹ For a unique collection of essays see Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbibe (eds), *On Geopolitics: Classical and Nuclear*, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, 1985.

²² Gray has remained dogged explaining East-West relations in a Mackinder-Spykman geopolitical mould. See his *The Geopolitics of Superpower*, *op.cit.*, especially chapter 2. For an interesting discussion of Gray's contribution to geopolitical analysis in the nuclear era see Francis P. Sempa, 'Geopolitics and

Nuclear Deterrence: A Misleading Focus

The aim of the following discussion is to demonstrate how the three assumptions comprising Colin Gray's 'world view', form the intellectual foundation of his theory of victory in nuclear war. To focus exclusively on the trail of strategic logic developed by Gray to justify the theory of victory, or the technological and operational requirements of his nuclear war-winning strategy, is to ignore the fact that debates over contending theories of nuclear deterrence are in essence political debates over issues such as the character of the Soviet Union and the nature of the Soviet-American conflict. As Robert Tucker stated:

Among the priesthood of experts, the nuclear debate is not primarily a debate over nuclear weapons but a debate over politics.²³

Through a combination of design and good fortune, the assumptions of the theory of victory have been sheltered from debate in strategic studies literature. Rarely is Gray explicit in making a connection between his strategic arguments on war-fighting deterrence, the MX ICBM and strategic defence for example, and the assumptions of his strategic thinking.²⁴ Because the assumptions are mainly conveyed in writings other than the two 'theory of victory' articles, those who are selective in their reading of Gray will acquire a distorted image of his 'world view'. More importantly, when Gray advocated and defended the theory of victory in the early 1980s, he deliberately formed (to borrow from Edward Thompson) an enclosed circle of self-validating strategic arguments which excluded a detailed representation of the assumptions.²⁵ Consequently much of the strategic discourse on nuclear

American Strategy: A Reassessment', *Strategic Review*, XV(2), Spring 1987, especially pp.33-34.

²³ Robert Tucker, 'The Nuclear Debate', *Foreign Affairs*, 63(1), 1984-85, p.4.

²⁴ A rare example is Gray's *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, 1986.

²⁵ Edward Thompson, 'Deterrence and Addiction', in Frank Barnaby and Geoffrey Thomas (eds), *The Nuclear Arms Race - Control or Catastrophe?*, Francis Pinter, London 1982, p.59.

deterrence reached a stalemate because Gray had recourse to self-validating strategic arguments with which to uphold his thesis and denigrate all dissenting commentary.

This series of self-justifying arguments in Gray's writings can be clearly presented. Gray begins by stating that nuclear deterrence is a 'regrettable necessity'.²⁶ The United States has no choice but to rely on nuclear deterrence as the ultimate guarantor of national survival.²⁷ While there is no concrete evidence to prove that nuclear deterrence is the sole reason why the United States and the Soviet Union have not engaged directly in a military conflict since 1945, Gray argues that 'the nuclear deterrence system is ineradicable: it is the only system that we have, it works, and it has to be nurtured so that it continues to work'.²⁸ More importantly, accepting the need for nuclear deterrence must logically involve preparations for nuclear war; the U.S. must devise an operational strategic nuclear doctrine from which it can 'accomplish its policy purposes, whatever they may be at the time'.²⁹

The need for an operational nuclear strategy relating means to ends is then used by Gray as the foundation for advocating his theory of victory which defines a clear policy objective for the U.S. - the forcible demise of the Soviet Union and the physical protection of the American homeland. The theory of victory is presented as a theory of nuclear deterrence surpassing stable deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction. The logic has now turned full circle. In summary, Gray argues that because there is no alternative to nuclear deterrence the only relevant policy debate involves contending nuclear strategies of which the theory of victory is allegedly superior to all other war-fighting strategies.

²⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Strategy: A Regrettable Necessity', *SAIS Review*, 3(1), Winter-Spring 1983, pp.13-28.

²⁷ For a dissenting view see John Mueller, 'The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World', *International Security*, 13(2), Fall 1988, pp.55-79.

²⁸ Colin S. Gray, '"Dangerous to Your Health": The Debate Over Nuclear Strategy and War', *Orbis*, 26(2), Spring 1982, pp.340.

²⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Strategy: A Regrettable Necessity', *op.cit.*, p.26.

To comprehend this closed circle of argumentation it is important to ask some fundamental questions: Why, according to Gray, is there no alternative to a 'system' of nuclear deterrence? Why must the United States rely on credible nuclear threats as the basis for its national security and survival? What is the rationale for Gray's claim that 'the nuclear deterrent cannot be eschewed' and that 'nuclear strategy must have a future; there is no other sensible choice'?³⁰ The answer to these questions can be located in Gray's insistent belief in a permanent East-West political conflict resulting from the fixed structure of international relations and the existence of an adversary (the Soviet Union) waging an inalienable struggle against Western democracies. Gray is unable to visualise an alternative international system free from the dangers of global nuclear war, or to conceive of a stable world order in which the United States and the Soviet Union accommodate and resolve their political differences. Rather, Gray alleges that the anarchic international system dominated by Power Politics requires preparations for nuclear war.

Nuclear strategy flows from the needs of the structure of international politics.

Once strategy is recognised to be a necessity, the only issue remaining is how to pursue it most effectively.³¹

For Gray, the logic is clear and straightforward.

Focusing here on the assumptions of Gray's strategic logic provides a further insight into the arguments used to support the theory of victory in nuclear war. For example, because international politics is portrayed as a permanent division between a revolutionary and expansionist power (the Soviet Union) and a *status quo* or 'satisfied' power³² (the United States), Gray argues that

³⁰ Colin S. Gray and Keith B. Payne, 'Nuclear Strategy: Is There a Future?', *Washington Quarterly*, 6(3), Summer 1983, p.66.

³¹ Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, *op.cit.*, p.26.

³² Colin S. Gray, 'Arms Control and European Security: Some Basic Issues', in L. Hagen (ed.), *The Crisis in Western Security*, Croom Helm, London, 1982, p.110.

Post-colonial, post-great-power NATO-Europe, in alliance with a geopolitically satisfied, island-superpower United States, can be trusted with whatever degree of military superiority it can secure and sustain - the Soviet empire cannot be so trusted.³³

Furthermore, strategic superiority for the United States is vital following the logic of Classical Geopolitics. If credible first-use nuclear threats are to be issued on behalf of distant allies then American strategic superiority for escalation dominance is paramount.

Gray's claim for U.S. strategic superiority also raises the important issue of the relationship between the theory of victory and nuclear war causation. Lawrence Freedman noted that 'The question of what happens if deterrence fails is vital to the intellectual cohesion and credibility of nuclear strategy'.³⁴ But Gray's answer to the question: 'what are likely to be the causes of deterrence failure', is vital for the credibility of his theory of victory. As explained in Chapter Two, critics of Gray's theory of victory maintain that nuclear war-winning strategies are destabilising and increase the risk of nuclear war. Gray, however, is adamant that the United States, in possession of superior offensive and defensive military capabilities, cannot possibly be either an underlying or precipitate cause of World War III. On the contrary, the U.S. would be in most need of a nuclear war-winning strategy 'on the one night in twenty or thirty years' when

Soviet leaders were unable to discern any politically acceptable alternative to taking military action or because they had become convinced that war was inevitable.³⁵

In other words, because the Soviet Union is allegedly an insecure empire, the U.S. must be prepared to respond to an impending military confrontation originating from circumstances where 'truly desperate Soviet leaders' confronted 'what they might

³³ Colin S. Gray, 'War-Fighting For Deterrence', *op.cit.*, p.7.

³⁴ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, *op.cit.*, p.395.

³⁵ Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*, *op.cit.*, p.113.

define as a crisis of empire and regime'.³⁶ For Gray, the most plausible context for an outbreak of nuclear war is one where the United States is compelled to respond to Soviet aggression (most likely on attempted seizure of territory in Western Europe or the Persian Gulf region) stemming from a political crisis within the Soviet empire.³⁷ Gray's view of the Soviet Union as an insecure empire has, therefore, largely determined the course of his strategic thinking.

To recapitulate, the driving force behind Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war is the framework of assumptions reviewed earlier that compelled him to use a chain of strategic logic to develop his thesis. The theory of victory, therefore, emerged from an unchanging world view seen through the eyes of one American civilian strategic analyst wearing the 'strait-jacket' of a contentious theory of international relations - Classical Realism or Realpolitik. There is a very close relationship between Gray's vision of international relations; Soviet-American political rivalry; Soviet strategic culture and geopolitics, and his argument for a theory of victory. If the three assumptions are the rationale for the strategic logic behind Gray's theory of victory, as this discussion claims, then that strategic logic can be sustained only if the assumptions are shown to be valid under critical examination.

Assessing the Assumptions: Towards a Critique

As a preliminary observation, a feature of the three related assumptions is Gray's pretence that they are not controversial. He states categorically that they portray the world 'as it really is'; that they constitute truths concerning the essence of

³⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Nuclear Deterrence and Technological Change: Retrospect and Prospect', in Roman Kolkowicz (ed.), *The Logic of Nuclear Terror*, *op.cit.*, p.162.

³⁷ This has remained a consistent theme in Gray's writings. See 'The Military Requirements of U.S. Strategy', *Military Review*, LIX(9), September 1979, p.7; 'Arms Control: Problems' in R.James Woolsey (ed.), *Nuclear Arms: Ethics, Strategy, Politics*, ICS Press, San Francisco, 1984, p.161; and 'Strategic Forces' in Joseph Kruzal, *American Defense Annual, 1981-1987*, *op.cit.*, p.68.

international relations and the nature of Soviet-American political competition. Gray claims to be upholding the one correct view of international relations. The following is a fair sample of pertinent comments:

... policy makers are obliged by the ethic of consequences to deal with the world as it is, not as they would like it to be.³⁸

U.S. policy must be designed to cope with the world as it is.³⁹

Deplorable though it may be, the fact remains that the world of international politics is a jungle wherein the strong and the ruthless devour the weak.⁴⁰

Realpolitik, for all the ambivalence of the central concepts of power and interest, is the enduring condition of international politics.⁴¹

... The academic study of international relations has 'taken off' into a self sustained growth in a direction very largely irrelevant to what one must call the real world.⁴²

When Gray stated in an article that Soviet society is locked into a 'life-and-death' struggle with American society he added in a footnote, 'This is a statement of fact and has no political coloration whatever'.⁴³ According to Philip Lawrence, 'The Hobbesian impulse to conflict' is portrayed by Gray 'as a basic datum, the immutable fact upon which strategic studies rests'.⁴⁴

Gray's style of providing statements of fact concerning the 'real world' has a number of implications. It enables Gray to revel in his own circular and self-confirming strategic logic on the theory of victory. Gray relies on a technique where the assumptions are briefly presented as truths or facts, and remain as background

³⁸ Colin S. Gray, 'Dangerous to Your Health: The Debate Over Nuclear Strategy and War', *op.cit.*, p.335.

³⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'International Order and American Power', *op.cit.*, p.29.

⁴⁰ Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, *op.cit.*, p.28.

⁴¹ Colin S. Gray, 'Foreign Policy - There is No Choice', *op.cit.*, p.125.

⁴² Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era*, *op.cit.*, p.3.

⁴³ Colin S. Gray, 'Who's Afraid of the Cruise Missile?', *op.cit.*, p.10, footnote 15.

⁴⁴ Philip K. Lawrence, 'Nuclear Strategy and Political Theory: A Critical Assessment', *Review of International Studies*, 11(2), April 1985, p.115.

while a detailed thesis on war-fighting deterrence and victory is developed. It also enables Gray to reject outright all other contributions to the debate on nuclear deterrence for their alleged failure to address the 'real world' of Power Politics and Soviet-American political and ideological competition. If the five selected statements cited above are accepted at face value there would be no need for debate and Gray's thesis on war-fighting deterrence and victory would not be that controversial. But how do we know the true nature of international relations? Gray's only claim is that his 'world view' portrays reality whereas rival interpretations of international relations do not. Gray provides no evidence to support his convictions. The weakness of this intellectual device is glaring.

Gray maintains that there is an 'objective world' from which the enduring features of international politics can be distilled and described. These features, including geopolitics, Power Politics, and the nature of the Soviet adversary, should determine American national security objectives and help define its foreign policy interests. The U.S. must, therefore, operate within the structural boundaries of international politics. Implicit in Gray's argument is that America's participation in global politics will not impact on the very nature of the international system but rather is necessary because of the way the international system operates. But the course of American action prescribed by Gray - the global containment of Soviet power and the possession of a nuclear war-winning strategy for deterrence - can only perpetuate the very international system which led Gray to justify this course of action in the first instance. Gray concludes that because international relations is essentially a game of Power Politics, the U.S. must be relentless in its defence of vital global interests and denial of Soviet military power and political influence. Gray's advice to U.S. policymakers, however, will only help to ensure that the Soviet Union and the United States are locked into a permanent adversary relationship with the attendant risk of nuclear war.

Furthermore, much of Gray's contribution to strategic debates is itself theoretical, especially the thesis on war-fighting deterrence and victory. Gray acknowledges that because of the absence of historical experience relating to nuclear war, the merit of one argument on nuclear deterrence can only be judged in relation to another argument or set of ideas. Yet Gray attempts to foreclose theoretical debate by either dismissing contending approaches to the study of international relations for their unreality and irrelevance, or subsuming all foreign policy issues under the rubric of Power Politics. Gray's insistence on attempting to describe the world 'as it is' leads to a debasement of the very notion of international relations theory. Finally, in 1982, Gray stated:

All strategists acquire what may be termed a strategic ideology. Whatever the issue may be, no strategist simply appraises the facts.⁴⁵

For nearly two decades Gray has been presenting to readers so-called facts about the nature of international relations and the geopolitical basis for East-West political competition, to support his main strategic arguments on nuclear deterrence. He has claimed, for example, that American national security policy must be guided by the structural nature of the international system.

Two important theoretical developments, which set the agenda for debate in the American strategic studies community during the 1980s, provide a useful avenue to further challenge the assumptions of Gray's theory of victory. In his 1977 article, 'Across the Nuclear Divide', Gray concluded triumphantly that 'the burden of proof would seem to rest upon those who claim, explicitly or tacitly, that 1945 truly

⁴⁵ Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies and Public Policy*, op.cit., p.3. For an early presentation of this view see Gray's 'Hawks and Doves: Values and Diplomacy', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 3(1), Spring 1975, where on p.93 he states: 'The sequential and incremental nature of strategic debate ensures that the professional strategist tends not to take a sabbatical to ask fundamental questions of himself. The larger assumptions tend to remain unexamined and inarticulated. What is the nature of international politics? What is the role of force in international politics? What are the proper functions of strategic forces?'

marked a great divide in international political affairs'.⁴⁶ Gray argued that the practice of statecraft and the nature of international relations had not been ruptured by the advent of nuclear weapons.

In recent years, Robert Jervis has convincingly demonstrated - through a carefully articulated thesis built on the conceptual foundations laid by Bernard Brodie and Thomas Schelling - that nuclear weapons have both revolutionised military strategy and transformed the nature of international relations, especially the way nuclear armed states organise and conduct their external relations.⁴⁷ In particular, Jervis put forward two related arguments which have serious implications for the validity of Gray's view of strategy and statecraft in the nuclear age. Firstly, military victory in nuclear war is impossible. An adversary in possession of an invulnerable nuclear retaliatory capability would always be capable of raising a nuclear conflict to higher levels of destruction, irrespective of which side possessed more counterforce capabilities. The condition of 'Mutual Vulnerability' has, therefore, rendered military strategy, as applied to conventional wars prior to 1945, obsolete in the nuclear age.⁴⁸

Secondly, Jervis argued that advocates of nuclear war-fighting strategies apply pre-1945 military concepts and principles to the nuclear age. This is a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'conventionalization'. Beginning with Hans Morgenthau⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Across the Nuclear Divide - Strategic Studies, Past and Present', *op.cit.*, p.46.

⁴⁷ For the development of Jervis' thesis on the 'Nuclear Revolution' see 'Why Nuclear Superiority Doesn't Matter', *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), Winter 1979-80, pp.617-633; *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1984; 'The Nuclear Revolution and the Common Defense', *Political Science Quarterly*, 10(5), 1986, pp.689-703; and *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospects of Armageddon*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1989.

⁴⁸ This argument is conveyed most strongly in 'The Nuclear Revolution and the Common Defense', *op.cit.*

⁴⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, 'The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy', *The American Political Science Review*, 58(1), March 1964, pp.23-35; 'The Fallacy of Thinking Conventionally About Nuclear Weapons' in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf (eds), *Arms Control and Technological Innovation*, Croom Helm, London, 1977, pp.255-264. An excellent discussion of 'conventionalization' with extensive references to Colin Gray, is Charles-Philippe David, *Debating Counterforce: A Conventional Approach in the Nuclear Age*, Westview Press, Boulder, Col., 1987.

and popularised during the 1980s, 'conventionalization' amounts to the claim that because victory is no longer a viable objective for nuclear armed adversaries unable to physically protect their homeland, efforts to acquire more war-fighting capabilities and devise a more sophisticated nuclear war-fighting strategy are non-sensical or illogical.

The second important development during the 1980s was the emergence of empirical and theoretical analyses that questioned the main assumption of deterrence theory: that political leaders will always behave rationally and make rational decisions, even during a crisis when deterrence would be tested.⁵⁰ The 'rational actor' assumption has been challenged on the basis that it excludes a number of factors which may effect decision making, especially decisions on whether or not to go to war. These factors include psychological pressures that might lead to irrational behaviour, misperception, and the inability of leaders to make rational decisions given the pressures of time and the over-supply of information.⁵¹ In developing a war-fighting theory of nuclear deterrence, Gray assumes that Soviet leaders will behave the way he has specified and totally ignores the possibility of one or more of those factors cited above resulting in a Soviet decision to, either initiate nuclear war through a pre-emptive strike or, pursue a course of action that increases the risk of inadvertent nuclear war. While threats to destroy the Soviet leadership would probably 'enhance Soviet anxieties', as Gray claims, how these heightened anxieties would induce Soviet restraint in a crisis is not at all clear.

This criticism of Gray's assumption of rational Soviet decision-making and behaviour, during an acute crisis involving the United States, can be broadened to include his prognosis of the Soviet threat to Western security for the 1980s and 1990s.

⁵⁰ See R. Jervis, R.N. Lebow and J.G. Stein, *Psychology and Deterrence*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1985; and Paul C. Stern, R. Axelrod, R. Jervis and R. Radner (eds) *Perspectives on Deterrence*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989.

⁵¹ A useful overview of the critique of 'rational deterrence theory' can be found in Andrew Mack, *What is Wrong With Deterrence Theory*, Working Paper No.76, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, October 1989.

When Gray developed a critique of stable deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction he was very critical of American civilian strategists for not addressing the Soviet Union as a strategic/cultural entity striving to gain military and political advantage over the United States. His main underlying concern was that a condition of rough parity at the strategic nuclear level combined with a clearly identifiable malign Soviet style in strategy would undermine America's national security in the 1980s. In particular it was argued that the U.S. would no longer be able to credibly issue nuclear threats on behalf of allies in Europe and the Middle East, whereas the Soviet Union would be prepared to use its newly acquired strategic power to secure a favourable war outcome if nuclear deterrence failed. The anticipated consequences of Gray's strategic assessment, however, did not eventuate in the 1980s. The failure of Gray's 'Soviet threat' to materialize questions the validity of his interpretation of Soviet strategic culture.

Gray's prescription of the 1980s as a 'dangerous decade' for the West, most likely stemming from a Soviet imperial crisis, sits uncomfortably alongside the pattern of Soviet behaviour in international politics during this period. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that Gray exaggerated the political significance of the Soviet military build up during the 1960s and 1970s. The Soviet Union did not use the military power acquired during the 1970s as a platform to attain either strategic superiority over the United States or political leverage. There has also been a contraction of Soviet foreign military intervention symbolised by the military withdrawal from Afghanistan. More recently the disintegration of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe has not resulted in a Soviet military response to restore political authority as was experienced in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968). And the move by an increasing number of Soviet Republics to gain political independence has been met with a fair degree of caution and restraint from the Soviet Union. In addition, the currently benign character of Soviet-American political relations further reduces the prospects of a direct military confrontation between the

superpowers, and lends support to the popular view that an opportunity presently exists for a resolution of those outstanding political differences dividing East and West.

There are fundamental weaknesses in Gray's gloomy assessment of Soviet long term intentions towards the United States. He engages in the fairly simple academic exercise of using selective source materials to develop his thesis. Gray relies heavily on the works of analysts of Soviet history and strategy, such as Richard Pipes and Edward Luttwak, to present his thesis on Soviet strategic nuclear doctrine. He also quotes selectively from professional Soviet military journals. The important point is that there does exist an equally impressive body of literature to strongly contest Gray's view of Soviet style in strategy.⁵² The second weakness is that apart from offering an interpretation of Soviet history and culture, Gray consistently fails to provide any evidence to support his extreme views. Gray's claim that the Soviet Union is waging an 'inalienable political struggle' against the West and that it is an insecure empire, to use only two examples, remain unsubstantiated. According to Charles Reynolds, most of Gray's arguments concerning the Soviet Union are based on nothing more than value judgements which raise many important normative issues.⁵³

Finally, the one noticeable feature of all Gray's writings after 1985 is the persistent use of arguments which have clearly been overtaken by events in international relations. The resilience of Gray's 'world view' to changing circumstances has resulted in his Soviet threat thesis becoming obsolete. The arguments used by Gray in 1990 to portray the Soviet Union as a permanent

⁵² A useful starting point is Raymond L. Garthoff, 'Mutual Deterrence and Strategic Arms Limitations in Soviet Policy', *International Security*, 3, Summer 1978, pp.112-147. A recent, and penetrating, critique of the Soviet nuclear threat thesis developed by American analysts during the 1970s and 1980s is provided by Richard Ned Lebow in 'Malign Analysts or Evil Empire?: Western Images of Soviet Nuclear Strategy', *International Journal*, XLIV(1), Winter 1988-89, pp. 1-40.

⁵³ Charles Reynolds, *The Politics of War: A Study of the Rationality of Violence in Inter-State Relations*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1989, pp.96-97.

American adversary are indistinguishable from those he put forward a decade earlier. Even the tone of Gray's writings today and the language employed are identical to those of the 1970s. This can be demonstrated by answering the following questions. What has been Gray's assessment of the Soviet Union since Gorbachev's ascendancy to power in 1985? How does Gray characterise the marked improvement in Soviet-American political relations in the second half of the 1980s? How does he interpret events in Europe as recent as December 1989?

According to Gray, the reform process undertaken by Gorbachev, commonly known as *Perestroika*, must not blind Western leaders to 'the still persisting facts of Russian-Soviet culture' that should remind us of the need 'to keep our missile guidance systems well calibrated'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Gray describes the improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States after 1986 as only a transitory phase in what remains a permanent struggle between two antagonistic social and political systems.⁵⁵

Gray still argues that America's principal external security condition, the Soviet Union, has not abandoned its global hegemonic ambitions, and that it continues to engage in a relentless pursuit for more power and influence at the expense of American interests.⁵⁶ He claims that the Soviet Union deliberately uses the arms control process to secure political and strategic advantage over the United States. Despite the new momentum of dialogue between the major powers established through the arms control process, Gray has been very critical of all arms control negotiations that have taken place in the 1980s.⁵⁷ The political transformation

⁵⁴ Colin S. Gray, 'National Signatures in Defense', *op.cit.*, p.25.

⁵⁵ Colin S. Gray, 'The United States and the Balance of Power: Another "Weary Titan?"', *Defense Science*, 7(7), July 1988, pp.56-59.

⁵⁶ Colin S. Gray, 'Perestroika and the Realities of Soviet Power', *National Defense*, LXXV(447), April 1988, pp.41-43.

⁵⁷ See Colin S. Gray, 'Outlook Is as Bleak on Regional Conflict as on Arms', *Los Angeles Times*, 10 November 1985, Part IV, p.5; 'The Gorbachev Offensive', *Society*, 24(5), July/August 1989, pp.38-44; 'In Pursuit of START, We're Committing Familiar Sins', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 December 1987, Part II, p.7; 'Arms Control Without Strategy ... Again: Blundering On',

of Eastern Europe in early 1990 has also been received cautiously by Gray, from the perspective of American national security. He believes the United States must remain heavily armed and vigilant because:

much of the geostrategic and other prudential logic that should help shape U.S. policy and the U.S. defense effort in this decade [1990s] applies, regardless of the context of the political headlines of the day.⁵⁸

In other words, the United States must retain a robust nuclear deterrent because 'the future of international security politics is likely to be very much like its past'.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ *Defense Science*, 7(3), March 1988, pp.53-55; 'People, Not Weapons, Make War', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 45(4), May 1989, p.34.

⁵⁹ Colin S. Gray, 'Tomorrow's Forecast: Warmer/Still Cloudy', *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, 116, May 1990, p.40.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.43.

CONCLUSION

During the 1980s, Colin Gray's primary objective in advocating the theory of victory in nuclear war was to explain why the United States ought to acquire a strategic nuclear doctrine which in the event of deterrence failure 'should hold U.S. casualties down to a level compatible with national survival and recovery'.¹ In essence, the theory of victory in nuclear war is a theory of nuclear deterrence or war prevention. Gray argued that the provision of a significant damage limitation capability for the American homeland through active and passive defences would overcome the paralysing condition of U.S. self-deterrence, thus restoring credibility to extended deterrence. Furthermore, the acquisition of a survivably based hard target counterforce ICBM, such as MX, capable of destroying in a prompt retaliatory strike the most highly valued assets of the Soviet state, should have the maximum dissuasive effect on the minds of Soviet leaders contemplating the use of military force to respond to an acute security crisis.

The theory of victory emerged from a decade where the prevailing American concept of strategic stability or stable deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) had come under attack from within the civilian strategic studies community and official circles. It was argued that the strategic, political and technological environment of the 1970s undermined the assumptions of stable deterrence thinking. Consequently, the U.S. was in urgent need of a flexible and credible nuclear war-fighting strategy that avoided suicidal threats to lay waste to the Soviet homeland. Gray became a leading critic of MAD during the 1970s and spent most of the decade trying to unify concepts such as 'Counterforce', 'Damage Limitation' and 'City Avoidance' into a cohesive operational strategic nuclear doctrine informed by a superior theory of nuclear deterrence. The most noteworthy development in the formulation of Gray's strategic theory was how he went beyond the requirements of a

¹ Colin S. Gray and Keith B. Payne, 'Victory is Possible', *op.cit.*, p.25.

nuclear war-fighting strategy, such as limited and controlled nuclear war for intra-war deterrence or Soviet 'victory denial', to espouse a war-winning or classical strategy. When Gray first articulated the theory of victory in 1979 he claimed to be offering an impeccable theory of nuclear deterrence based on strategic logic which would compel the United States to invest in those offensive and defensive technologies for his nuclear war-winning strategy to become viable.

This thesis has strongly challenged the political, technological and operational feasibility of Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war. The criticisms reviewed in Chapter Two raise innumerable questions relating to the implementation of Gray's war-winning strategy and how its central objective, a political victory for the United States, would be secured. Defending population centres from a long range nuclear missile attack remains an unobtainable strategic objective for the indefinite future, notwithstanding President Reagan's 1983 pledge to 'render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete' via a multi-tiered space based ballistic missile defence. The offensive nuclear targeting doctrine favoured by Gray is equally problematic. It is increasingly difficult for the United States to locate, isolate, and successfully target Soviet command authorities and leadership centres, because the Soviet Union continues to invest heavily in those measures to ensure its own physical survival for the duration of a nuclear exchange. In addition, a deliberate strategy of counter-leadership targeting is incompatible with nuclear war termination. Destroying the Soviet leadership, either in the initial or latter stages of a nuclear exchange, removes the principal avenue through which a negotiated settlement short of total nuclear war could be achieved. Counter-leadership targeting would most likely result in a process of rapid escalation to an all out nuclear war. The theory of victory would, therefore, be indistinguishable from Mutual Assured Destruction.

Those critics who confined their analysis of the theory of victory to technical issues alone, failed to address the broader question of whether the theory has a sound theoretical basis, as Gray alleged. They focused on the important question: is Gray's

theory of victory technologically and operationally feasible? - but bypassed an equally important question: is it desirable? The issue of desirability or otherwise is irrelevant if our answer to the above question of feasibility is in the affirmative. Whether or not the theory of victory is feasible is an issue that cannot be settled conclusively. It remains possible for the United States to undertake massive and sustained investment in ballistic missile defence systems and modernise the strategic triad to achieve a measure of damage limitation for the American homeland, perhaps nearing Gray's figure of 20 million U.S. casualties. While such an effort would not guarantee a political victory in nuclear war, it highlights the opportunities that exist for the United States to follow Gray's strategic advocacy.

Some critics did argue that nuclear war-winning strategies are not desirable because they are destabilising and increase the risk of nuclear war. This criticism, however, did not amount to a detailed analysis of either Gray's argument that a theory of victory is the best possible war-fighting/deterrent strategy or its underlying assumptions. The critics simply presented their own conception of what deters the Soviet Union and the requirements of stable deterrence, without addressing Gray on his own terms. Adherents to the view that nuclear war-winning strategies are destabilising only succeeded in provoking a harsh rebuke from Gray, enabling him to forcefully reiterate his theory of victory throughout the 1980s.

Although the theory of victory was a product of strategic developments in the 1970s, it remains today an expression of what Gray believes is technologically feasible, strategically essential for deterrence and war-fighting but not politically viable for at least the remainder of this Century. Assuming that under optimum political and technological conditions, the United States attempted to acquire sufficient offensive nuclear firepower and defensive capabilities to plan for both the physical protection of its population centres and a political victory following a nuclear exchange, the important question of whether a plausible strategic theory would justify

a transition towards a nuclear war-winning strategy would not have been satisfactorily addressed in strategic studies literature.

This thesis has demonstrated that a comprehensive and balanced critique of Gray's theory of victory in nuclear war must focus on the assumptions underpinning his strategic reasoning. In particular, it was highlighted that the chain of strategic logic used by Gray to criticise stable deterrence through Mutual Assured Destruction and uphold his nuclear war-winning strategy, is based on a fixed 'world view' consisting of three arguments:

- power politics and the balance of power are the defining characteristics of international relations in the nuclear age;
- the Soviet Union is an insecure empire ideologically committed to an unremitting political struggle with an antagonistic social system, whereas the United States is a contented status quo power with no hegemonic ambitions; and
- for geopolitical reasons the United States and the Soviet Union are locked into a political competition for global power and influence.

For nearly two decades, Gray has been relentless in presenting these three assumptions as truths or facts concerning international relations and the dynamics of great power rivalry. An assessment of these assumptions in Chapter Three, however, revealed that they can be persuasively contested when subjected to empirical and theoretical analysis.

Gray's persistent use of questionable assumptions - developed more than a decade ago under different political and strategic circumstances to both explain the nature of Soviet-American political relations in 1990 and advise national security policies for the United States - leads to three concluding comments. Firstly, the assumptions of the theory of victory discussed in Chapter Three are increasingly irrelevant to the maintenance of global stability in the 1990s, especially in preserving stable deterrence and reducing the risk of nuclear war. Realpolitik, an insecure

empire waging a life and death struggle against Western democracies, and a permanent Soviet-American competition, are fanciful conceptions that have little, if anything, to do with the way the Soviet Union and the United States conduct and manage their relationship today. Secondly, because Gray is convinced that his strategic reasoning has enduring relevance for America's role in containing the Soviet Union, he can only continue to advocate a theory of war-fighting deterrence for nuclear victory by portraying international relations, the Soviet adversary, and Soviet-American political rivalry the way he did in the mid-1970s. If Gray relaxed the three rigid assumptions of his theory of victory he would at once unravel the strategic logic underpinning that theory and undermine the entire rationale of his strategic advocacy. This thesis has demonstrated how the strategic arguments used by Gray to advocate the theory of victory in nuclear war conceal an edifice of highly questionable assumptions. It can be concluded that, at least for the 1990s, the theory of victory is irrelevant to American strategic nuclear doctrine.

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